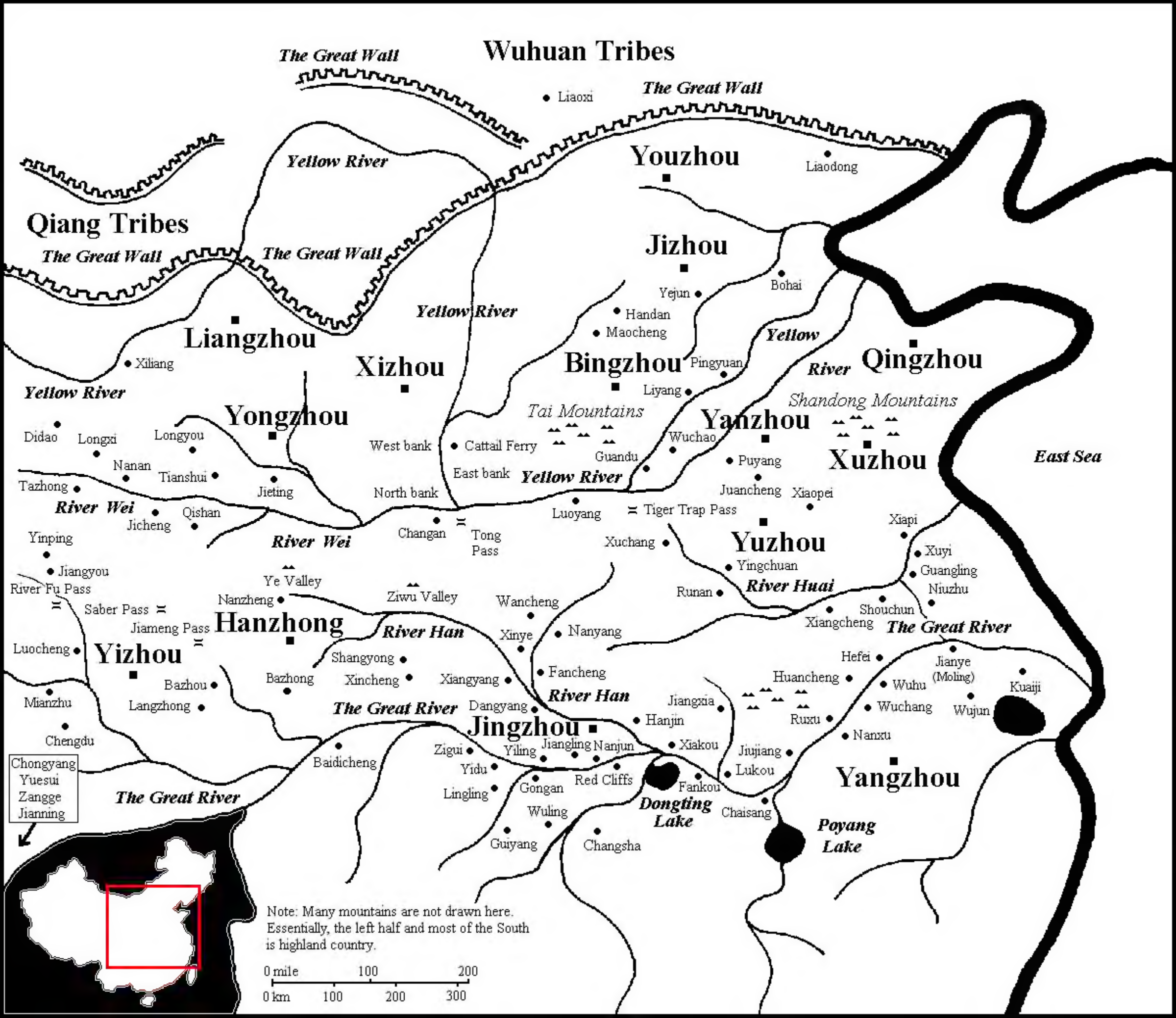
Wuhuan Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Liaoxi
Youzhou
Liaodong
Yellow River
Qiang Tribes
The Great Wall
The Great Wall
Jizhou
Bohai
Yejun
Handan
Maocheng
Yellow River
Liangzhou
Xizhou
Bingzhou
Pingyuan
Yellow River
Qingzhou
Xiliang
Yellow River
Liyang
Shandong Mountains
Tai Mountains
Yongzhou
Yanzhou
Didao
Longxi
Longyou
West bank
Cattail Ferry
Wuchao
Guandu
Xuzhou
East Sea
Nanan
East bank
Yellow River
Puyang
Tianshui
Tazhong
Jieting
North bank
Juancheng
Xiaopei
River Wei
Qishan
Luoyang
Tiger Trap Pass
Jicheng
Changan
Tong Pass
Xiapi
Yuzhou
Yinping
River Wei
Xuchang
Xuyi
Jiangyou
Ye Valley
Yingchuan
Guangling
River Fu Pass
Ziwu Valley
Runan
River Huai
Niuzhu
Saber Pass
Nanzheng
Wancheng
Shouchun
Jiameng Pass
Hanzhong
River Han
Xinye
Nanyang
Xiangcheng
The Great River
Luocheng
Yizhou
Shangyong
Hefei
Jianye (Moling)
Fancheng
Huancheng
Bazhou
Bazhong
Xincheng
Xiangyang
Wuhu
Kuaiji
River Han
Jiangxia
Mianzhu
Langzhong
The Great River
Dangyang
Wuchang
Wujun
Ruxu
Hanjin
Jingzhou
Chengdu
Nanxu
Zigui
Yiling
Jiangling
Nanjun
Xiakou
Jiujiang
Baidicheng
Yidu
Lukou
Yangzhou
Chongyang
Yuesui
Zangge
Jianning
Red Cliffs
Fankou
Gongan
Lingling
Dongting Lake
Chaisang
Wuling
Poyang Lake
Guiyang
Changsha
The Great River
Note: Many mountains are not drawn here.
Essentially, the left half and most of the South
is highland country.
0 mile 100 200
0 km 100 200 300

三国志 ⑯

曹操の智謀

横山光輝

希望コミックス 61

CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI
PART 1: CHARACTERS TO KEEP IN MIND

CAO CAO MENGDE:

THE AMBITIOUS AND MACHIAVELLIAN HERO OF SANGOKUSHI. AFTER RESCUING THE EMPEROR FROM LI JUE AND GUO SI, HE IS CURRENTLY THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN AND HAS CONTROL OVER THE IMPERIAL COURT.

CHEN DENG:

THE SON OF CHEN GUI AND FORMERLY THE SUBORDINATE TO TAO QIAN OF XUZHOU. EVER SINCE LU BU HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF XUZHOU, HE HAS SERVED LU BU BUT IN NAME ONLY. UNDER CAO CAO'S ORDERS, HE AND HIS FATHER SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CHEN GUI:

FATHER OF CHEN DENG WHO HAS SWORN FALSE ALLEGIANCE TO LU BU. HE AND HIS SON SUCCESSFULLY PLOTTED OUT LU BU'S DOWNFALL.

CONSORT HE:

HE JIN'S YOUNGER SISTER. ORIGINALLY A PEASANT, HER BEAUTY WAS NOTICED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS WHO THEN PRESENTED HER TO EMPEROR LING. SHE BECAME EMPEROR LING'S FAVOURITE CONSORT AND GAVE BIRTH TO PRINCE LIU BIAN. SHE AND HER SON WERE REMOVED FROM POWER BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED BY LI RU.

DIAN WEI:

CAO CAO'S FIERCE GENERAL RENOWNED FOR HIS STRENGTH. HE IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS "E LAI," A MIGHTY GENERAL WHO SERVED UNDER KING ZHOU. HE WAS KILLED IN VOLUME 12 DURING ZHANG XIU'S PLOT TO KILL CAO CAO AT WANCHENG.

DIAO CHAN:

A SLAVE GIRL BELONGING TO WANG YUN, BUT HE RAISED THE GIRL MORE OF AS HIS OWN DAUGHTER. IN VOLUME 7, SHE AND WANG YUN PLOTTED TO DISTANCE LU BU FROM DONG ZHUO. SHE KILLED HERSELF AFTER ACCOMPLISHING HER GOAL IN VOLUME 8.

DONG CHENG:

A TRUSTED RETAINER OF EMPEROR XIAN. IN VOLUME 9, HE HELPS THE EMPEROR ESCAPE FROM LI JUE AND GUO SI.

DONG ZHUO:

GOVERNOR OF LIANGZHOU WHO LATER SEIZES CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND SEATS HIMSELF AS THE CHANCELLOR OF HAN. HE IS DEPICTED AS SADISTIC, CORRUPT, AND RUTHLESS TYRANT. HE WAS KILLED BY HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN, LU BU.

GONGSUN ZAN:

GOVERNOR OF BEIPING WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO. HE WAGED WAR AGAINST YUAN SHAO AFTER THE LATTER TRICKED HIM AND KILLED HIS YOUNGER BROTHER BUT HAS SINCE MADE PEACE WITH YUAN SHAO.

GUAN YU YUNCHANG:

SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER TO LIU BEI AND SWORN OLDER BROTHER TO ZHANG FEI. HE IS AS FIERCE AS GUAN YU BUT IS MORE RESTRAINED AND CALM IN HIS MANNERISMS.

HE JIN:

OLDER BROTHER OF CONSORT HE. ORIGINALLY A SIMPLE BUTCHER, HE BECAME A GENERAL WHEN HIS YOUNGER SISTER BECAME EMPEROR LING'S CONSORT. HE ATTEMPTS TO THE TEN ATTENDANTS BUT IS DISSUADED BY HIS YOUNGER SISTER. HE IS LATER ASSASSINATED BY THE TEN ATTENDANTS.

JIA XU:

THE CUNNING STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO ZHANG XIU. IN VOLUME 12, HE AND ZHANG XIU PLOTTED A FAILED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON CAO CAO.

LIU BEI XUANDE:

THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF SANGOKUSHI. HE IS A KIND AND VIRTUOUS MAN SAID TO BE THE DESCENDANT OF EMPEROR JING OF HAN. HE HAS SWORN AN OATH OF BROTHERHOOD WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI. AS OF VOLUME 12, HE IS THE GOVERNOR OF XIAOPEI AND WORKING SECRETLY WITH THE CHEN FAMILY TO BRING DOWN LU BU.

LIU BIAO:

THE GOVERNOR OF JINGZHOU WHO, ALONG WITH YUAN SHAO, TRIED TO KILL SUN JIAN TO RECOVER THE STOLEN IMPERIAL SEAL. HE SUCCESSFULLY THWARTED SUN JIAN'S ATTEMPTS TO TAKE JINGZHOU. HAS CURRENTLY JOINED HANDS WITH ZHANG XIU.

LU BU:

HE IS SAID TO BE THE STRONGEST WARRIOR IN THE LAND WHO RIDES ON THE FASTEST HORSE IN THE LAND, THE RED HARE. HE IS CURRENTLY THE GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU. IN VOLUME 14 WHILE FIGHTING WITH CAO CAO AND LIU BEI'S FORCES, HE WAS BETRAYED BY HIS SUBORDINATES (HOU CHENG, WEI XU, SONG XIAN) WHO HANDED HIM OVER TO CAO CAO AND WAS EXECUTED.

SUN JIAN:

BORN IN WU COMMANDERY AND WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CHANGSHA. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE ALLIANCE TO BRING DOWN DONG ZHUO IN VOLUME 5. WHEN HE FOUND THE IMPERIAL SEAL, HIS ALLIES YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO ATTEMPTED TO KILL HIM TO RETRIEVE THE SEAL. IN VOLUME 7, HE TRIED TO EXACT HIS REVENGE BY ATTACKING LIU BIAO BUT WAS KILLED IN BATTLE.

SUN CE:

ELDEST SON OF SUN JIAN. AFTER LENDING YUAN SHU THE IMPERIAL SEAL TO BORROW AN ARMY, HE SUCCESSFULLY CONQUERED THE SOUTHEASTERN REGIONS OF JIANGNAN AND JIANGDONG.

SUN QUAN:

YOUNGER BROTHER OF SUN CE.

TAISHI CI:

SUN CE'S TRUSTED GENERAL, FORMERLY LIU YAO'S SUBORDINATE BUT LATER SWITCHED SIDES TO BECOME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE AFTER HE WAS CAPTURED.

TEN ATTENDANTS:

A CORRUPT GROUP OF 10 EUNUCHS WHO WERE THE HIGHEST RANKING MINISTERS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT. THEY SUCCEEDED IN ASSASSINATING GENERAL HE JIN BUT WERE LATER KILLED BY HE JIN'S ARMY LED BY YUAN SHAO.

WANG YUN:

AN OLD MAN WHO HOLDS THE POST OF MINISTER OF THE MASSES, ONE OF THE 3 HIGHEST RANKING POSTS IN HAN. HE SUCCESSFULLY PLOTS DONG ZHUO'S DOWNFALL. HE IS LATER KILLED BY REMNANTS OF DONG ZHUO'S ARMY WHO INVADE CHANG'AN (UNSHOWN IN MANGA)

WEN CHOU:

HE AND YAN LIANG ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS.

YAN LIANG:

HE AND WEN CHOU ARE YUAN SHAO'S TWO STRONGEST GENERALS.

XU CHU:

FORMERLY A PEASANT, HIS TALENTS WERE NOTICED BY CAO CAO WHO THEN TURNED HIM INTO ONE OF HIS SUBORDINATES. HE IS NOW A GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO.

YUAN SHAO:

ORIGINALLY AN ADVISOR TO HE JIN, HE LEFT THE CAPITAL AND BECAME THE GOVERNOR OF BOHAI COMMANDERY WHEN DONG ZHUO CAME TO RULE OVER LUOYANG. HE IS CURRENTLY THE GOVERNOR OF JIZHOU.

YUAN SHU:

YOUNGER BROTHER OF YUAN SHAO AND THE GOVERNOR OF NANYANG. AFTER RECEIVING THE IMPERIAL SEAL FROM SUN CE, HE HAS DECLARED HIMSELF AS THE EMPEROR OF ZHONG DYNASTY. IN VOLUME 15, HE DIED OF THIRST AFTER BEING ATTACKED BY LIU BEI AND CAO CAO'S ARMY.

XIAHOU DUN:

ONE OF CAO CAO'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 13, HE LOSES HIS LEFT EYE TO AN ENEMY ARROW DURING A BATTLE AGAINST LU BU'S FORCES.

ZHANG FEI YIDE:

A FIERCE, SHORT-TEMPERED WARRIOR WHO IS THE SWORN YOUNGER BROTHER OF LIU BEI AND GUAN YU.

ZHAO YUN ZILONG:

A FORMER RETAINER TO YUAN SHAO BUT HE IS NOW UNDER GONGSUN ZAN'S SERVICE. HE WISHES TO BE LIU BEI'S RETAINER, HOWEVER.

CHARACTERS OF SANGOKUSHI

PART 2: MINOR CHARACTERS

CAO HONG:

A GENERAL SERVING UNDER CAO CAO WHO IS ALSO HIS COUSIN. HE SAVED CAO CAO FROM CERTAIN DEATH IN VOLUME 6.

CAO SONG:

CAO CAO'S FATHER AND A FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. IN VOLUME 8, HE WAS KILLED BY ZHANG KAI, AN ESCORT SENT BY TAO QIAN, WHO WANTED TO STEAL HIS FORTUNES.

CHENG GONG:

A CITY GUARD CAPTAIN WHO ARRESTED CAO CAO, ONLY TO FREE AND ESCAPE WITH CAO CAO AFTER SYMPATHIZING WITH HIS STORY. HE LATER DEFECTS TO LU BU'S SIDE, AND SERVES AS HIS ADVISOR. HE IS KILLED ALONG WITH LU BU, IN VOLUME 14.

DING YUAN:

GOVERNOR OF BINGZHOU AND LU BU'S FOSTER-FATHER. HE OBJECTED TO DONG ZHUO'S SCHEME TO PLACE PRINCE CHENLIU AS THE EMPEROR OF HAN. HE WAS KILLED BY LU BU.

EMPRESS DOWAGER DONG:

FORMER EMPEROR LING'S MOTHER AND EMPEROR XIAN'S GRANDMOTHER. IN VOLUME 3, CONSORT HE ORDERED FOR HER DEATH IN ORDER TO SECURE HER SON LIU BIAN'S SEAT AS THE NEXT EMPEROR OF HAN.

GAO SHUN:

ONE OF LU BU'S TRUSTED GENERALS.

GUO JIA:

TALENTED STRATEGIST AND ADVISOR TO CAO CAO.

GUO SI:

A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED UNDER DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED. IN VOLUME 9, HE AND LI JUE FIGHT OVER THE EMPEROR BUT ENDS UP LOSING THE EMPEROR TO CAO CAO.

HOU CHENG:

ONE OF LU BU'S GENERALS. IN VOLUME 14, HE, ALONG WITH GENERALS WEI XU AND SONG XIAN, BETRAYED LU BU AND DEFECTED TO CAO CAO'S SIDE.

HUA XIONG:

ONE OF DONG ZHUO'S GENERALS. HE DEFEATED SUN JIAN'S ARMY BUT WAS LATER KILLED BY GUAN YU IN VOLUME 5.

JIANG QIN:

FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH ZHOU TAI BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE AFTER REMEMBERING HOW FIERCE HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN, WAS LIKE. HE AND JIANG QIN WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ALLOWING SUN CE TO CAPTURE NIUZHU.

LADY FUYOU:

FICTIONAL CHARACTER CREATED BY MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA AND LIU BEI'S FIRST LOVE. ZHANG FEI FORMERLY SERVED HER FAMILY, WHO WERE ALL KILLED BY THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELS.

LI JUE:

A GENERAL WHO FORMERLY SERVED UNDER DONG ZHUO. AFTER DONG ZHUO'S DEATH, HE AND LI JUE TOOK CONTROL OF LUOYANG AND DID AS THEY PLEASED. IN VOLUME 9, HE AND GUO SI FIGHT OVER THE EMPEROR BUT ENDS UP LOSING THE EMPEROR TO CAO CAO.

LIU BIAN:

THE SON OF CONSORT HE AND WAS BRIEFLY THE EMPEROR OF HAN AFTER EMPEROR LING'S DEATH. HE WAS DEPOSED BY DONG ZHUO AND LATER KILLED ALONG WITH HIS MOTHER BY LI RU.

LIU XIE (EMPEROR XIAN OF HAN):

FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU, HE IS THE CURRENT EMPEROR OF HAN. HE BECAME THE EMPEROR WHEN DONG ZHUO FORCIBLY DETHRONED HIS HALF-BROTHER LIU BIAN.

LIU YAO:

GOVERNOR OF YANGZHOU. HE STOLE THE LANDS OF DANYANG AWAY FROM SUN CE'S UNCLE, WU JIN. IN VOLUME 10, SUN CE SETS OUT TO RECLAIM HIS UNCLE'S LOST LANDS AND CONQUER THE REST OF YANGZHOU.

MA TENG:

GOVERNOR OF XILIANG AND FATHER OF MA CHAO. UNLIKE THE ACTUAL HISTORICAL FIGURE, HE IS DEPICTED AS A HAN LOYALIST IN THE STORY. IN VOLUME 15, HE SIGNED THE BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE THAT DONG CHENG CREATED.

TAO QIAN:

THE KIND GOVERNOR OF XUZHOU WHO ACCIDENTALLY ANGERED CAO CAO WHEN HIS DISLOYAL SUBORDINATE ZHANG KAI KILLED CAO CAO'S FATHER, CAO SONG.

XUN YU:

ONE OF CAO CAO'S MOST TALENTED ADVISORS.

ZHANG BAO:

ZHANG JIAO'S YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE YELLOW TURBAN'S GENERAL OF THE LAND. HE WAS KILLED BY LIU BEI IN VOLUME 2.

ZHANG JIAO:

LEADER OF THE YELLOW TURBAN REBELLION. HE PASSED AWAY DUE TO ILLNESS IN VOLUME 3.

ZHOU TAI:

FORMERLY A BANDIT ALONG WITH JIANG QIN BUT BECAME SUN CE'S SUBORDINATE AFTER REMEMBERING HOW FIERCE HIS FATHER, SUN JIAN, WAS LIKE. HE AND JIANG QIN WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN ALLOWING SUN CE TO CAPTURE NIUZHU.

ZHANG YING:

ONE OF LIU YAO'S GENERALS. HE WAS SENT TO DEFEND NIUZHU FROM SUN CE BUT WAS DEFEATED WHEN BANDITS (JIANG QIN AND ZHOU TAI) STAGED AN UPRISING FROM WITHIN.

ZHANG ZHAO/ZHANG HONG:

THE TWO GENIUSES OF JIANGDONG THAT ARE REFERRED TO AS THE "TWO ZHANGS." SUN CE SOUGHT TO ASK FOR THEIR ASSITANCE BEFORE SETTING OUT ON HIS CAMPAIGN TO CONQUER SOUTHEASTERN CHINA. AFTER SUN CE'S ADAMANT INSISTENCE, THEY FINALLY AGREED TO HELP HIM.

-MORE TO COME IN THE FUTURE-

SANGOKUSHI

16

CAO CAO'S INGENUITY

ZHANG FEI YIDE

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

SANGOKUSHI (ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS)

三国志（さんごくし）

VOLUME 16
CAO CAO'S INGENUITY

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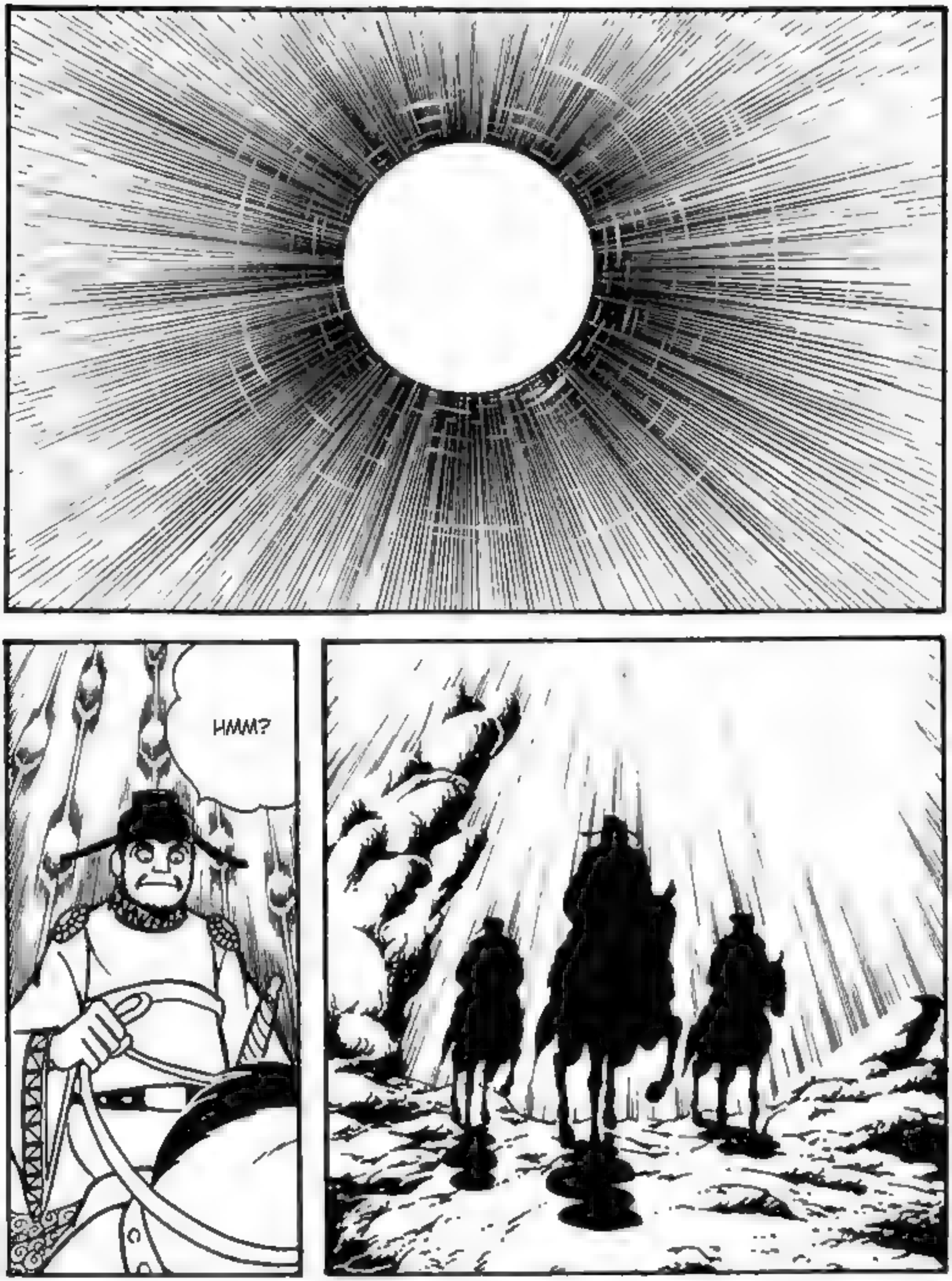
（月刊『少年ワールド』掲載）

ASSASSINATION ORDER



WHY IS THERE A MAN COLLAPSED OUT HERE??

W... WATER...

ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

HERE, DRINK UP.

YES, SIR.

GIVE SOME WATER TO THIS MAN RIGHT AWAY!

AH, NO... I'M NOT REALLY, UMM...

YOU LOOK LIKE A PALACE WORKER. JUST WHO ARE YOU EXACTLY?

SEARCH HIM.

MAGISTRATE XU LIU, HIS ACTIONS SEEM SUSPICIOUS.

HMM?

STAY STILL, WE'RE ONLY TRYING TO CONFIRM YOUR IDENTITY.

W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME!?

I SAID STAND STILL!

AHHH! T-THAT'S ...!

JUST WHY DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING ONLY THE EMPEROR SHOULD POSSESS!?

T-THE IMPERIAL SEAL!?

TAKE HIM IN! WE'LL DO A MORE THOROUGH INVESTIGATION BACK AT HOME.

THAT'S...

ALRIGHT, LET'S GO

I... I DIDN'T STEAL IT...

COUGH IT UP! JUST WHY DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THIS!? DID YOU STEAL IT FROM SOMEWHERE!?

AGHH!

THEN WHERE DID YOU GET IT FROM!?

WHAT!? YOU MEAN THAT FAKE EMPEROR!?

IT CAME INTO MY POSSESSION AFTER HE PASSED AWAY...

IT BELONGED TO YUAN SHU.

I MUST INFORM CHANCELLOR CAO CAO ABOUT THIS.

YES, THIS IS THE IMPERIAL SEAL WITHOUT A DOUBT.

ALLOW ME TO REWARD YOUR LOYALTY AND HARD WORK BY PROMOTING YOU TO THE GOVERNOR OF GAOLING.

THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING ME THIS, XU LIU.

I AM HONOURED, CHANCELLOR.

GOVERNOR OF GAOLING!?

NEXT!

AH, GENERALS ZHU LING AND LU ZHAO.

YES, SPLENDID WORK, GENERALS.

YUAN SHU AND HIS ARMY HAVE BEEN UTTERLY ANNHILATED.

WE HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM XUZHOU, MY LORD.

UMM, NO, MY LORD.

SO HAVE YOU BROUGHT BACK MY ARMY AS WELL?

LIU BEI SAID THAT HE NEEDED THOSE 50,000 SOLDIERS TO PROTECT THE BORDERS OF XUZHOU.

WHAT!?

HOW COULD YOU LEAVE MY ARMY THERE WITHOUT EVEN MY PERMISSION!

YOU FOOLS!

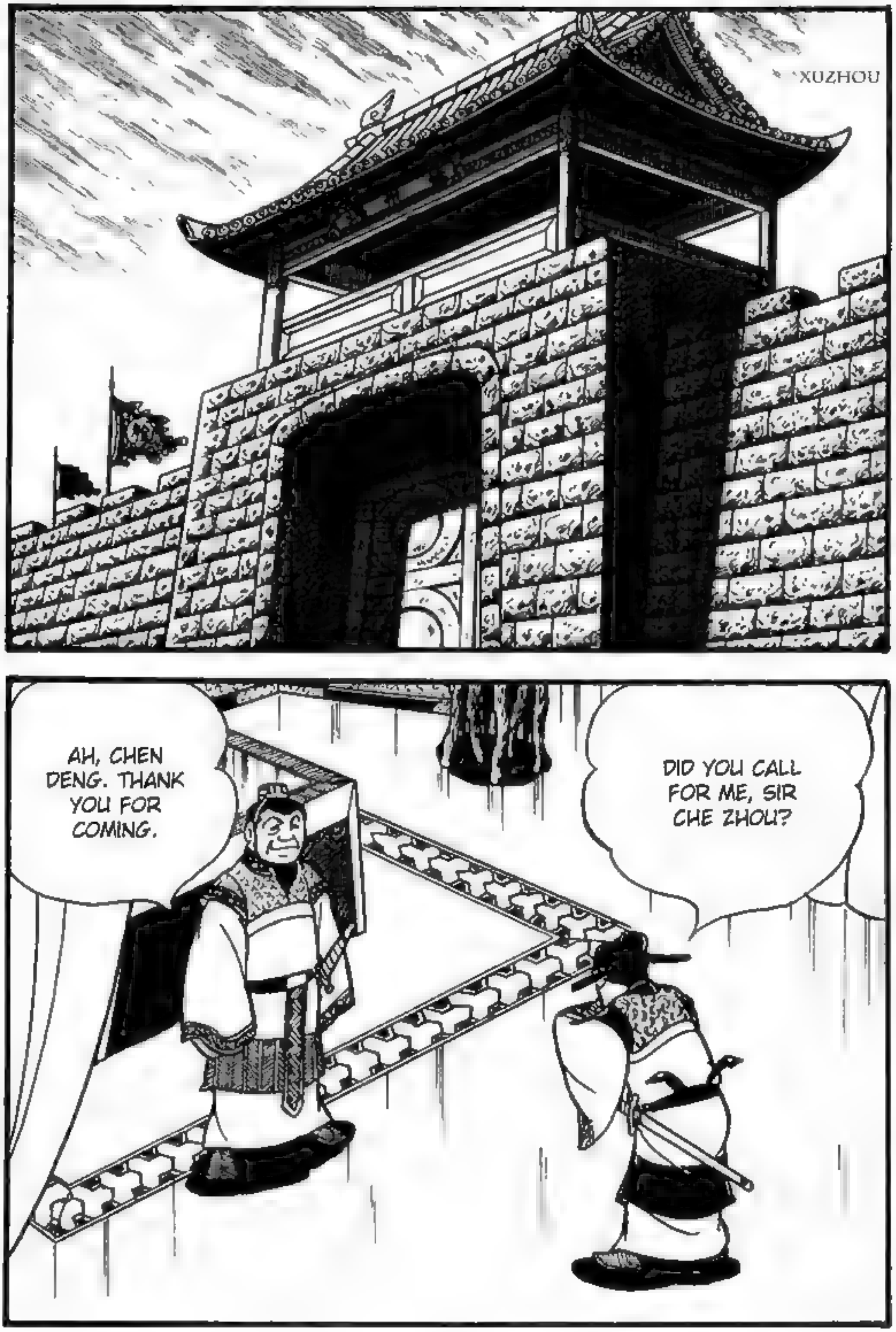
BUT WAS IT NOT MY LORD WHO APPOINTED LIU BEI AS THE COMMANDER AND TOLD US TO FOLLOW HIS ORDERS?

SIR, NOW THAT THINGS HAVE COME TO THIS, I SUGGEST WE IMMEDIATELY TAKE ACTION AGAINST LIU BEI.
ACTIONS?

NGHHH...!

HMM...
WE SHOULD SECRETLY SEND ORDERS TO HIM TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI.

WE STILL HAVE CHE ZHOU, THE DEPUTY IMPERIAL PROTECTOR OF XUZHOU.


XUZHOU
AH, CHEN DENG. THANK YOU FOR COMING.
DID YOU CALL FOR ME, SIR CHE ZHOU?

OF COURSE, THE CHEN FAMILY OWES A GREAT DEAL TO THE CHANCELLOR.

I TRUST THAT YOUR LOYALTY TO CHANCELLOR CAO CAO STILL HAS NOT WAVERED, YES?

?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'VE JUST RECEIVED A SECRET ORDER FROM THE CHANCELLOR.

THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.

AN ASSASSINATION ORDER, I SEE...

AH!

YES...

AN EXCUSE LIKE AN INVITATION FOR A BANQUET WILL DO.

ISN'T THAT A SIMPLE MATTER? ALL WE NEED TO DO IS INVITE HIM HERE TO THE CASTLE AND THEN AMBUSH HIM.

I SHALL DO SO RIGHT AWAY.

I SEE, THAT'S A GREAT IDEA!

LIU BEI'S POLITE NATURE WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO REFUSE SUCH AN INVITATION.

AH, YES. THANK YOU, CHEN DENG.

THEN I SHALL CALL IN MY OWN SUBORDINATES AS WELL TO PREPARE FOR THE AMBUSH, SIR.

YES, WHAT SHOULD WE DO FATHER...?

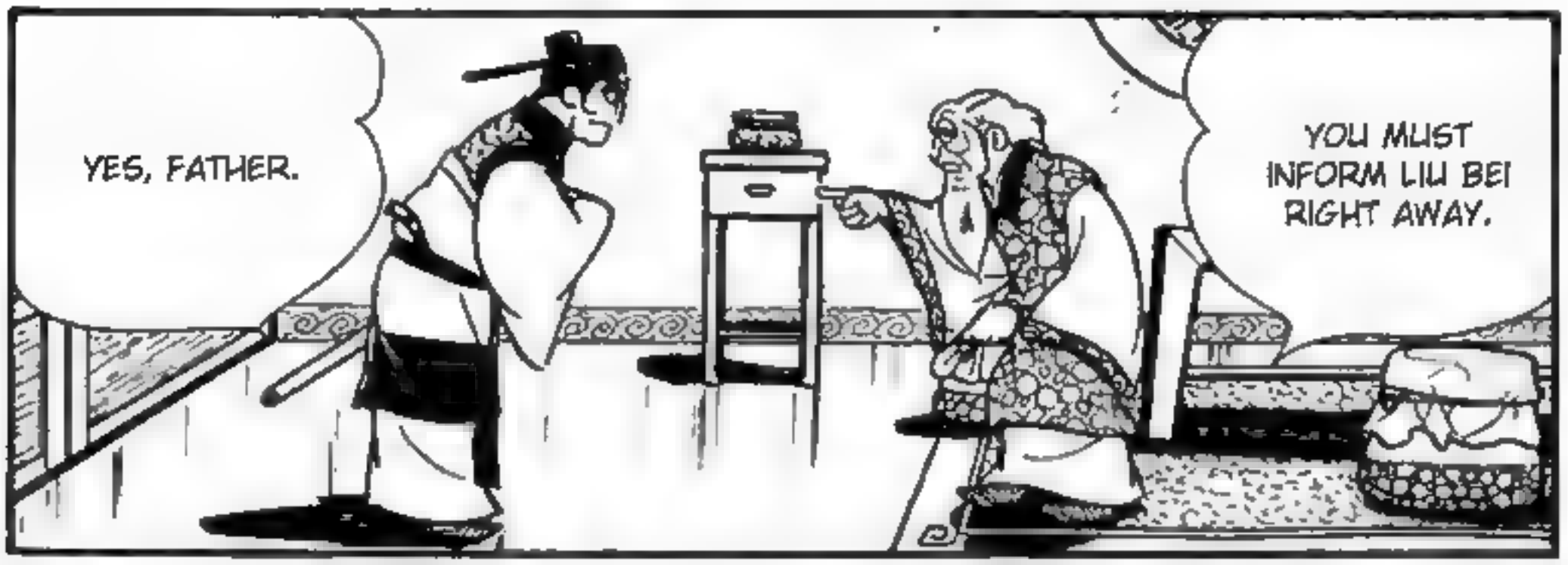
WHAT!? CAO CAO HAS GIVEN A SECRET ORDER TO KILL LIU BEI!?

....

THOUGH WE ARE INDEBTED TO CAO CAO, WE CANNOT STAND BY AND WATCH A MAN LIKE LIU BEI BE KILLED.

OF COURSE, I PRETENDED TO BE FINE WITH THE ORDER WHEN TALKING TO CHE ZHOU.

YES, THAT IS WHAT I THOUGHT AS WELL.


YES, FATHER.
YOU MUST INFORM LIU BEI RIGHT AWAY.

I'VE COME TO SPEAK WITH GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI.

W-WHAT BRINGS SIR HERE AT THIS HOUR...?

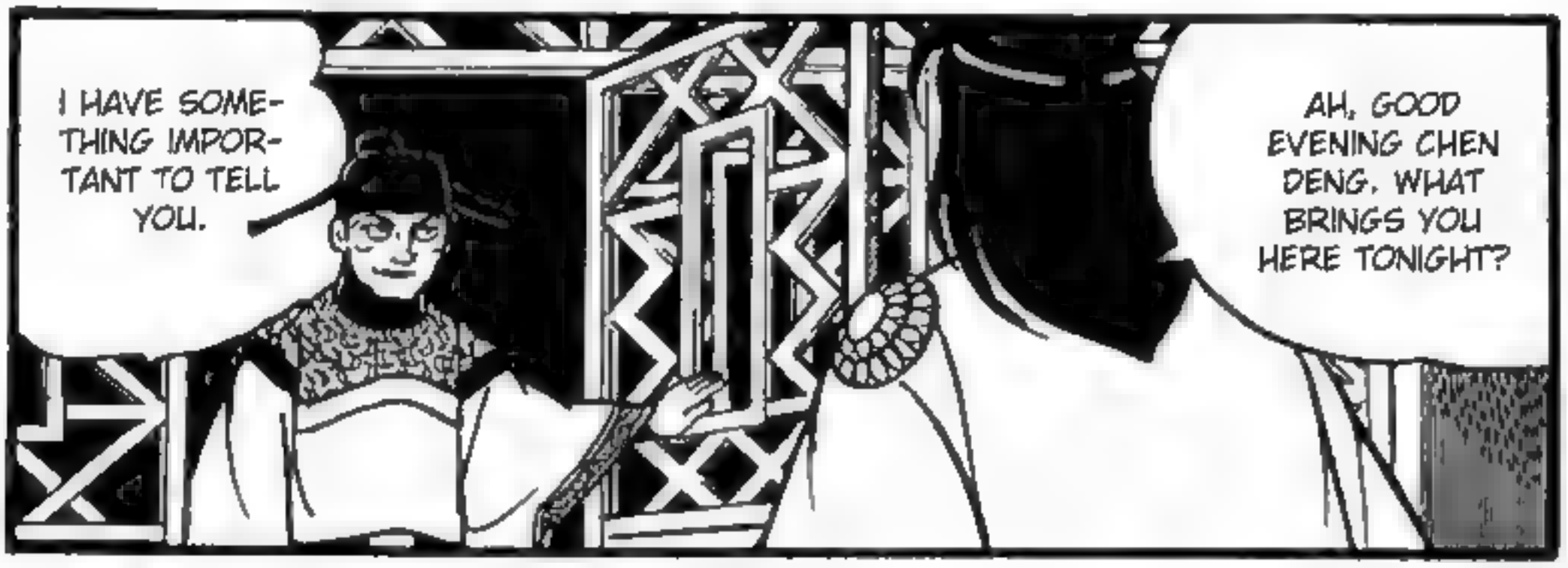
IT IS I, CHEN DENG.

WHO IS IT?

CHEN DENG?

THIS WAY, SIR.

GENERAL, CHEN DENG HAS COME TO SPEAK WITH SIR.


I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU.
AH, GOOD EVENING CHEN DENG. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE TONIGHT?

CHE ZHOU PLANS TO INVITE LIU BEI TO XUZHOU CASTLE FOR A BANQUET WHERE HE'LL AMBUSH AND KILL HIM.

WHAT!?

CAO CAO HAS ORDERED CHE ZHOU TO ASSASSINATE LIU BEI.

WE DON'T EVEN NEED TO CONSULT WITH BROTHER ABOUT THIS!

IF IT'S COME TO THIS, LET'S JUST BARGE IN AND CUT OFF CHE ZHOU'S HEAD...!

THAT BASTARD... SO HE FINALLY REVEALS HIS FANGS...

THEN WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

CALM DOWN, ZHANG FEI. IT'LL BE HARD TO EVEN GET IN THE CASTLE WHAT WITH CHE ZHOU'S FORCES INSIDE.

AH, THAT'S RIGHT!

IF ONLY WE COULD GET THEM TO OPEN THE CASTLE GATES...

WE'LL USE THAT TO PRETEND WE'RE CAO CAO'S FORCES AND HAVE THEM OPEN THE GATE FOR US.

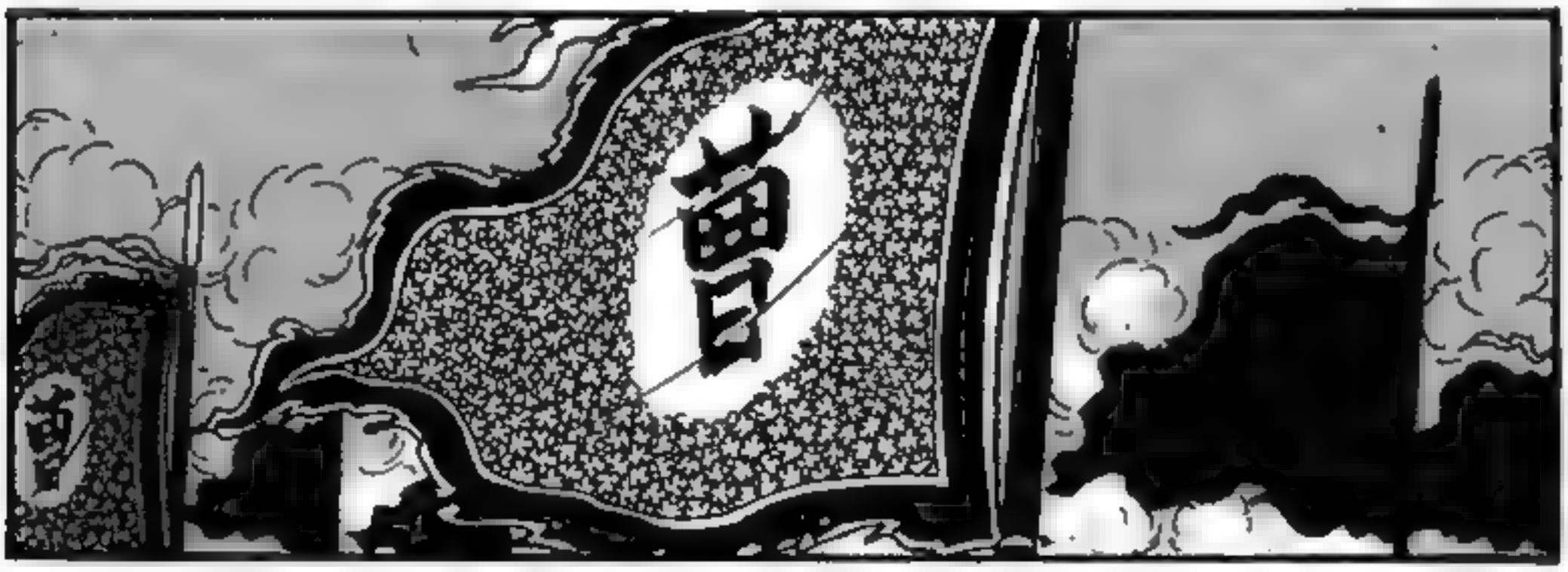
WE CAN USE CAO CAO'S FLAG FROM THE ARMY HE LENT US AWHILE BACK.

AH, NO, NOT A PROBLEM AT ALL. LIU BEI IS TOO GREAT OF A MAN TO MEET HIS END NOW.

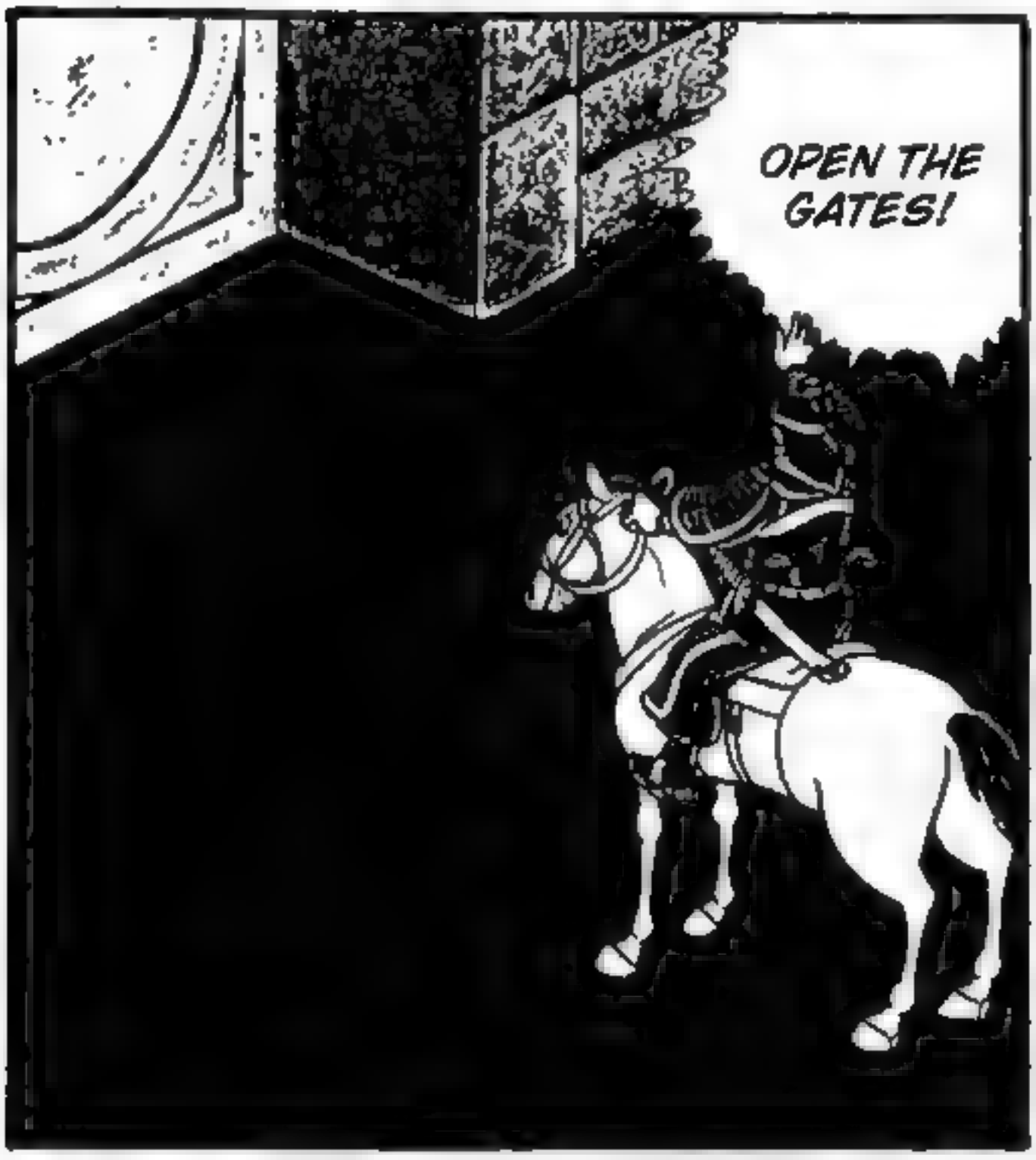
THANK YOU FOR WARNING US, CHEN DENG.

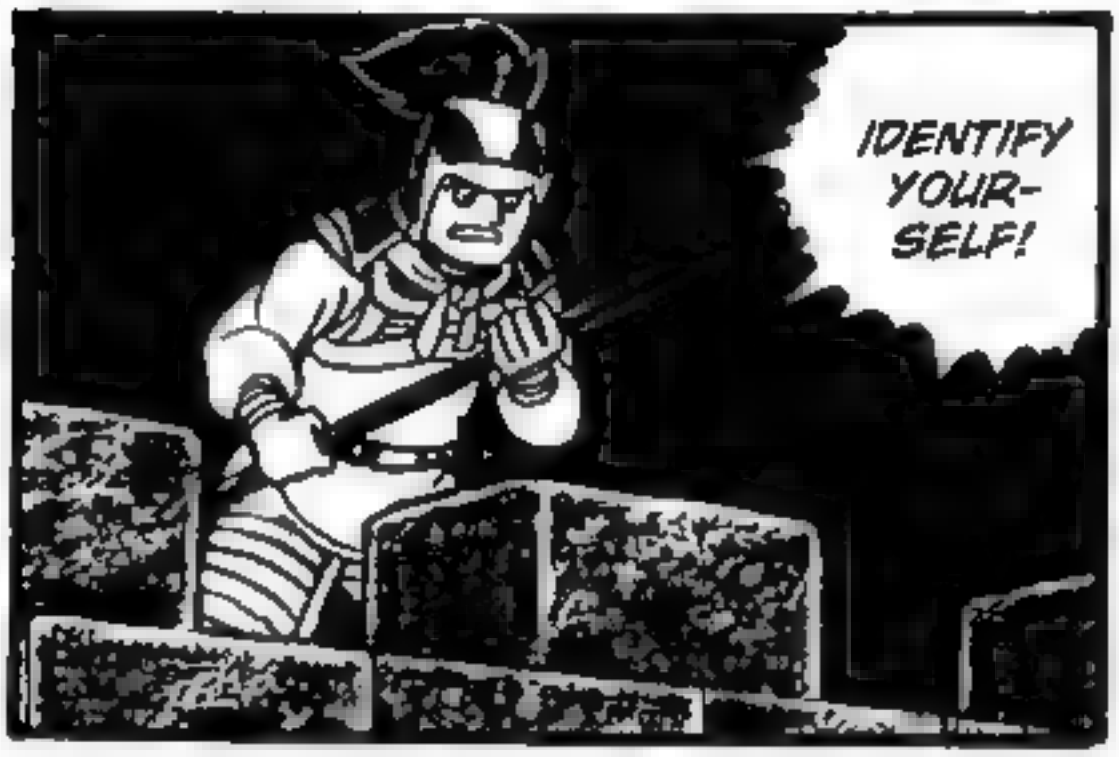
GOOD, THEN IT'S SETTLED!

THEN I MUST RETURN BACK TO THE CASTLE BEFORE I RAISE ANY SUSPI-CIONS...


曹

REMEMBER TO FOLLOW THE PLAN.


OPEN THE GATES!


IDENTIFY YOUR-SELF!

IT IS I, GENERAL ZHANG LIAO, SENT HERE FROM XUCHANG BY THE CHANCELLOR ON URGENT BUSI-NESS! OPEN THE GATES AT ONCE!

JUST LOOK AT OUR FLAGS!

AND CAN YOU PROVE YOUR IDENTITY!?

IN ANY CASE, I'LL GO INFORM CHE ZHOU FIRST.

IT'S TOO HARD TO SEE...

WHAT?

SIR, GENERAL ZHANG LIAO HAS COME FROM THE CAPITAL AND DEMANDED US TO OPEN THE GATES.

HMM...

WHAT! ARE YOU DOUBT-ING ME!?

GENERAL ZHANG LIAO, I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT IT IS TOO DARK TO CONFIRM YOUR FLAG, MUCH LESS YOUR IDENTITY. I ASK THAT YOU PLEASE WAIT UNTIL MORNING BEFORE I CAN OPEN THE GATES!

SIR, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE FLAG OUTSIDE IS THAT OF THE CHANCELLOR.

I WAS NOT INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF YOUR ARRIVAL AND SO I CANNOT RISK OPENING THE GATES RIGHT NOW.

THIS IS BAD...

YES, IT DOES APPEAR THAT WAY BUT I WOULD RATHER WAIT UNTIL MORNING TO DOUBLE CHECK IF POSSIBLE.

THEY'RE STILL SUSPICIOUS OF US.

BROTHER, IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THEY'RE GOING TO OPEN THE GATES.

IF YOU REFUSE TO OPEN THE GATES, I SHALL ASSUME THAT YOU MUST BE PLOTTING AGAINST THE CHANCELLOR WITH LIU BEI!

CHE ZHOU! WE HAVE COME HERE UNDER THE CHANCELLOR'S DIRECT ORDERS FOR A MATTER OF MOST IMPORTANCE!

WE'LL BE FOUND OUT WHEN DAWN COMES...

YES...

AND I SHALL REPORT TO THE CHANCELLOR OF YOUR BETRAYAL!

OPEN THE GATES!

W-WAIT! I'LL OPEN THE GATES SO JUST WAIT!

LOOKS LIKE IT WORKED.

YES, BUT DON'T RUSH THINGS YET.

WELCOME TO XUZHOU, GENERAL ZHANG LIAO.

AH!

GOOD EVENING, CHE ZHOU.

W-WE'VE BEEN HAD!!!

I-IT'S GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI!

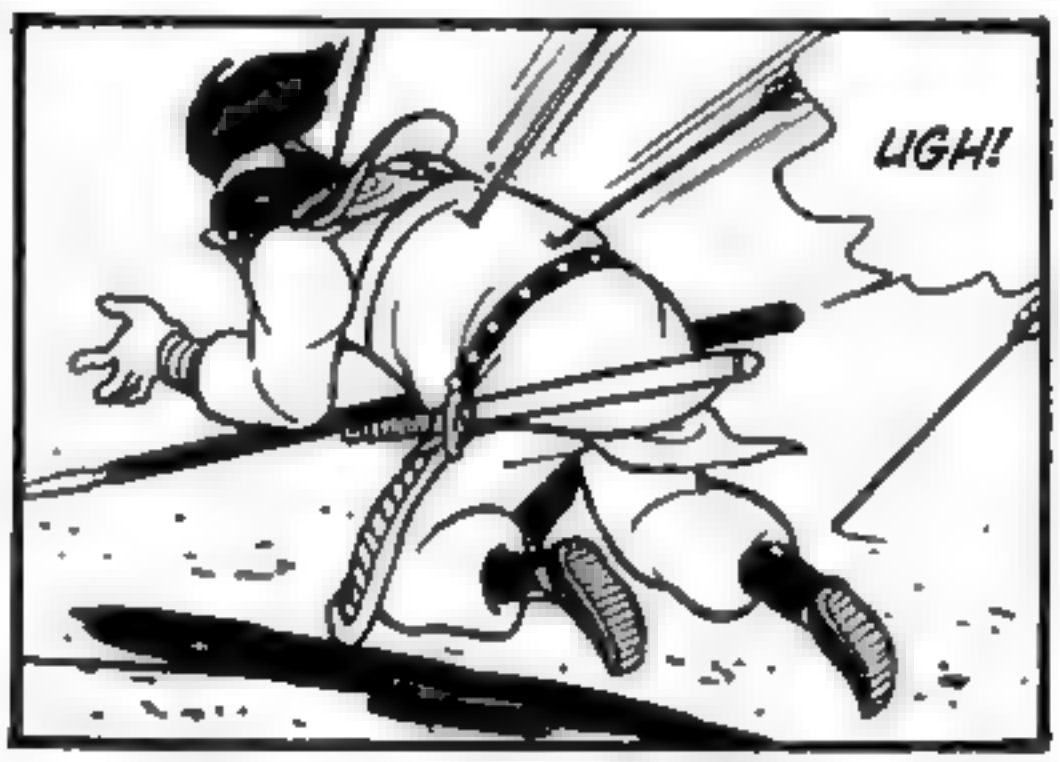
IT'S TOO LATE TO REGRET YOUR MISTAKE!

S-SIR...!

AHHH!

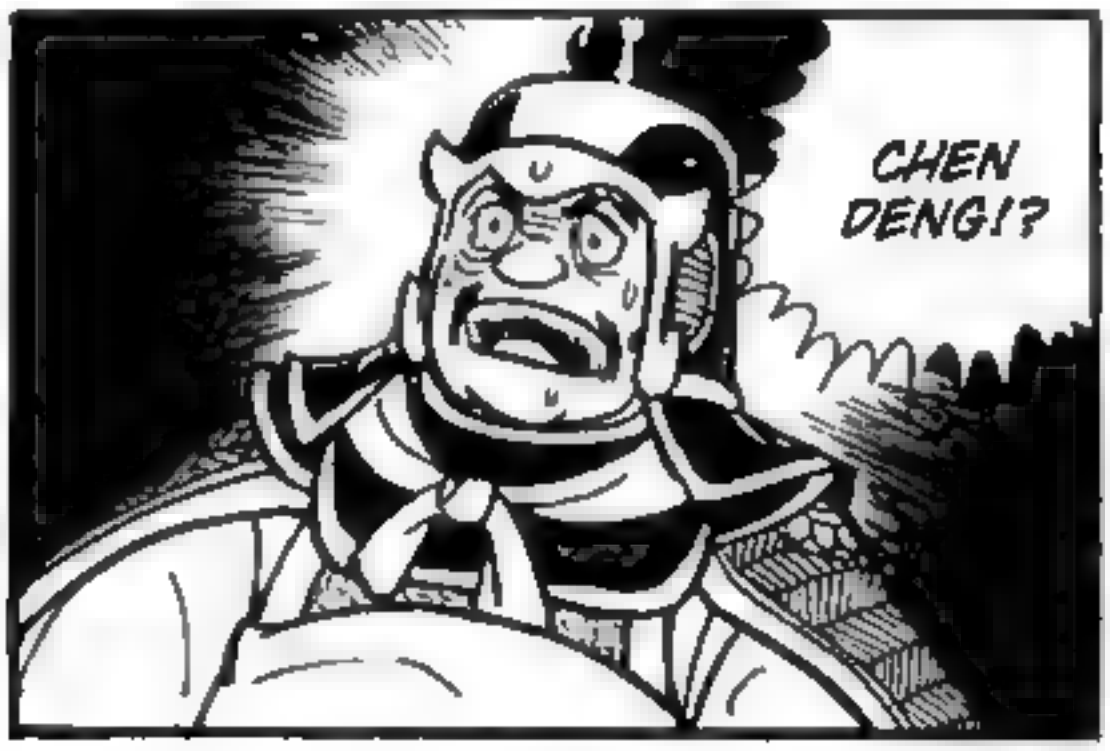
DON'T LET A SINGLE ENEMY SOLDIER ESCAPE!

AVENGE CHE ZHOU'S DEATH!

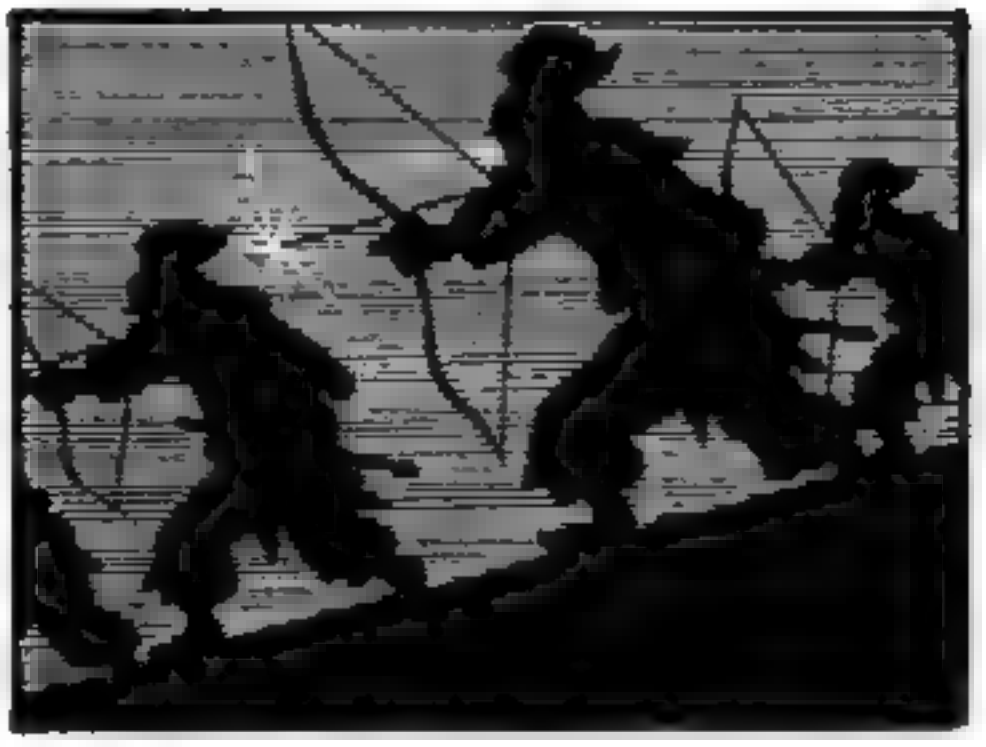

UGH!

AGH!

WHAT!? THE CASTLE GUARDS ARE SHOOTING AT US!?


CHEN DENG!?

ヒュ!!



HMM, I DON'T SEE GUAN YU NOR ZHANG FEI ANY-WHERE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY'VE GONE?

WHAT!?

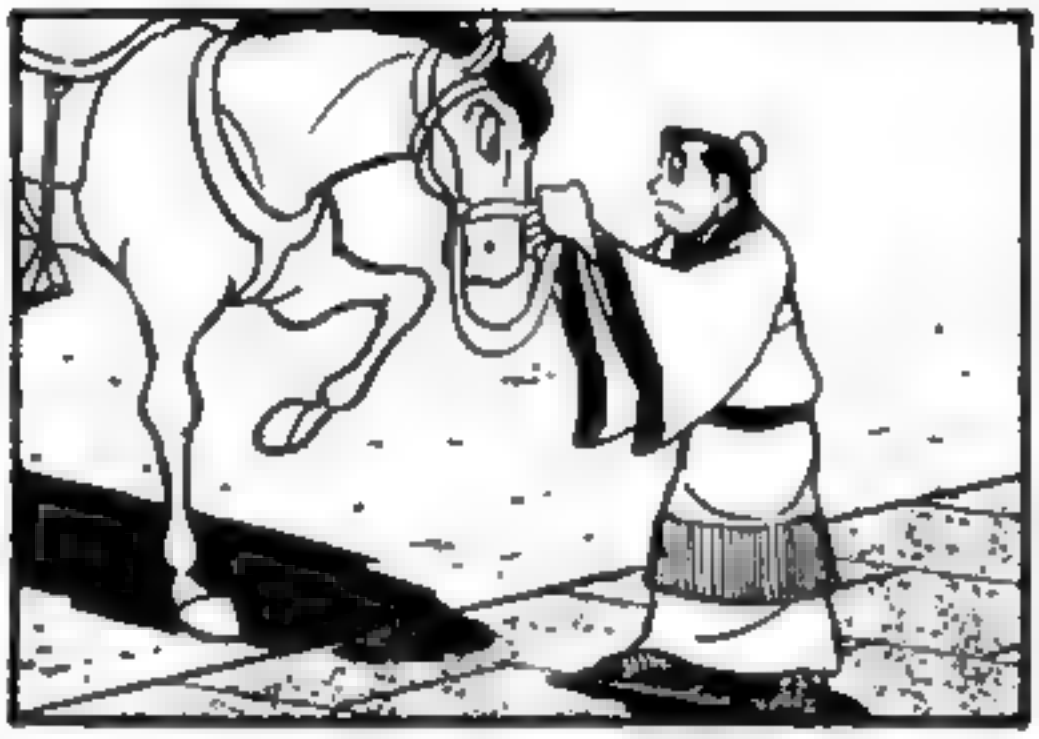
THEY'VE GONE TO ATTACK CHE ZHOU'S FORCES AT XUZHOU CASTLE, SIR.

CHEN DENG CAME LAST NIGHT TO TELL GENERALS GUAN YU AND ZHANG FEI THAT CHANCELLOR CAO CAO HAS PLACED A SECRET ORDER TO ASSASSINATE SIR. HEARING THAT, THE TWO GENERALS IMMEDIATELY LEFT LAST NIGHT TO ATTACK XUZHOU.

WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY!?

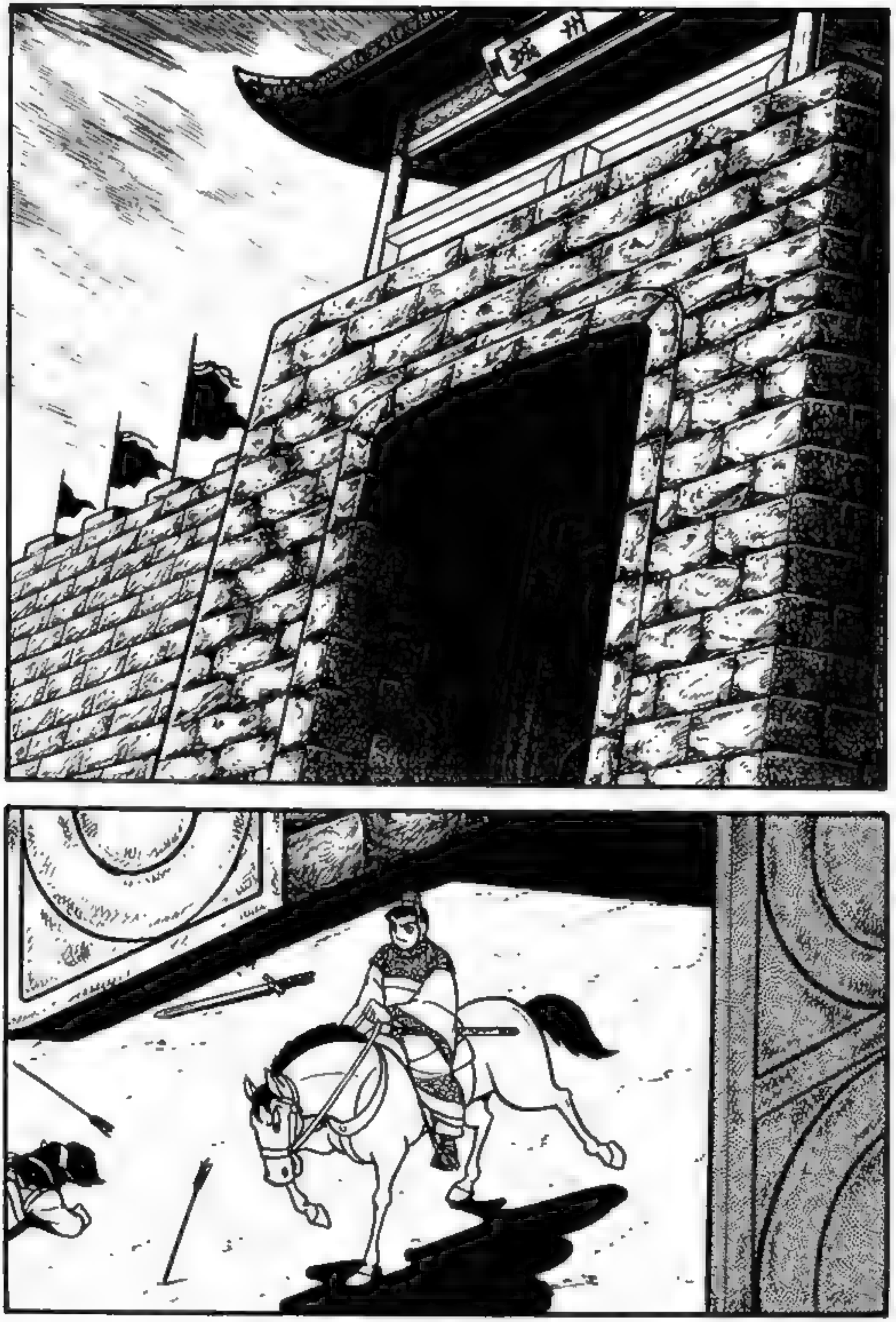
THEY SAID THAT IT WASN'T A MATTER THAT THEY NEED TO CONSULT WITH SIR...

W-WHY DID THEY NOT TELL ME ABOUT THIS!?



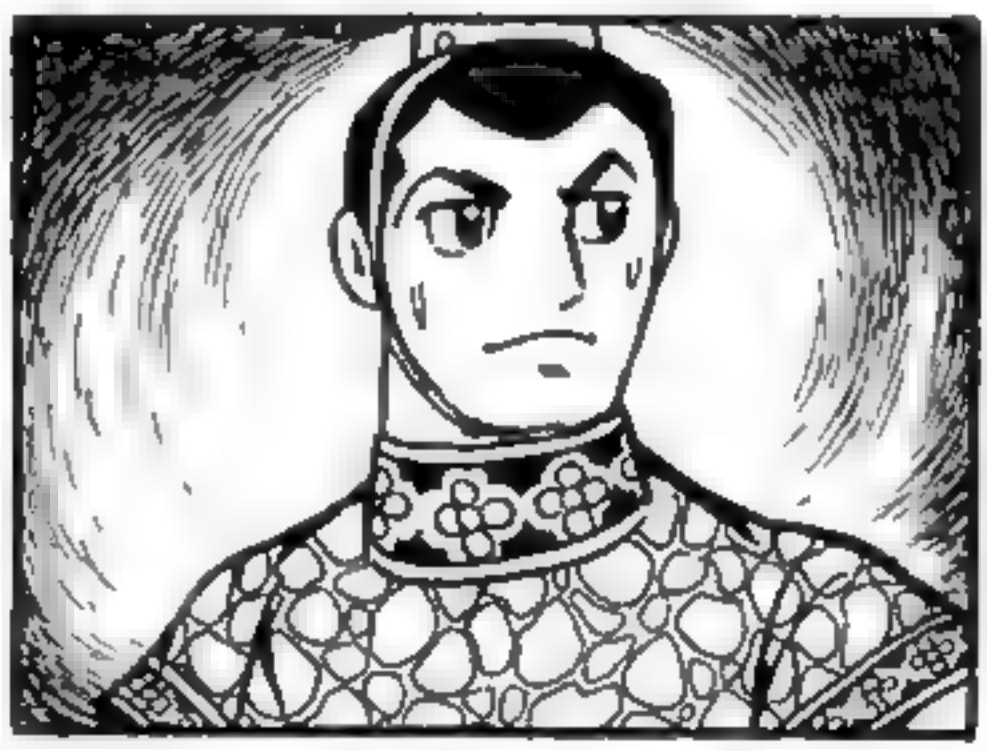
YES, SIR.
BRING ME MY HORSE AT ONCE!

I SHALL GO SEE WHAT HAPPENED.



AH!

CHE ZHOU!



AH, SO YOU'VE COME, BROTHER.

WELL, WE FIGURED THAT IT WASN'T SOMETHING THAT WE NEEDED TO TROUBLE YOU WITH.

I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED. WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT IT BEFOREHAND?

YOU DIDN'T WANT TO TROUBLE ME!? DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT WE'VE NOW MADE ALL OF CAO CAO'S FORCES INTO OUR ENEMIES!?

B-BUT HE ORDERED FOR YOUR ASSASSI-NATION, BROTHER!

JUST WHY DO YOU THINK I BUSIED MYSELF WITH GARDEN-ING AND FEIGNED A PHOBIA OF THUNDER FOR!? IT WAS ALL TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE I WAS NOT A THREAT UNTIL I BUILT A PROPER BASE OF POWER!

YES, I KNOW.

BUT NOW WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FACE CAO CAO'S ENTIRE ARMY...

BUT YOU DIDN'T NEED TO KILL CHE ZHOU. WE COULD'VE JUST CAUGHT HIM AND THEN THOUGHT OF A BETTER COURSE OF ACTION.

DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT I HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO TAKE ON CAO CAO RIGHT NOW!?

UMM... I GUESS WE OVERDID IT A LITTLE, BROTHER...

NO USE CRYING OVER SPILT MILK. CAO CAO WILL SURELY SEND HIS ARMY TO ATTACK XUZHOU SOON...

AND WHY IS THAT, CHEN DENG?

AH!

PLEASE WORRY NOT, SIR.

?

THERE IS A CERTAIN OLD MAN LIVING IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF HERE WHO SPENDS HIS DAY DRAWING AND WRITING POETRY.

HE ALSO HAPPENS TO BE A GOOD FRIEND OF YUAN SHAO...

HIS NAME IS ZHENG XUAN AND HE USED TO WORK IN THE IMPERIAL COURT.

IF THERE IS ONE MAN WHO CAN STAND UP TO CAO CAO, IT IS HIM.

YUAN SHAO IS MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER AFTER CONQUERING BEIPING.

YUAN SHAO ALSO GREATLY RESPECTS ZHENG XUAN.

I'M SUGGESTING SIR TO BORROW YUAN SHAO'S HELP BY ASKING ZHEN XUAN TO WRITE A FAVOURABLE LETTER TO HIM.

JUST WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY, CHEN DENG?

THAT IS EXACTLY WHY SIR MUST ASK ZHEN XUAN FOR HELP.

WHAT!? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS I WHO KILLED HIS YOUNGER BROTHER YUAN SHU!?

WITHOUT HIS HELP, THERE WILL BE NO TOMORROW FOR SIR.

THEN I SHALL SEND WORD TO HIM AT ONCE.

FINE, LET US GO SEE ZHENG XUAN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEN.

A SINGLE LETTER

AND SO I'VE BEEN QUITE EAGER TO MEET YOU AT LAST.

I'VE HEARD A LOT OF GOOD PRAISE ABOUT YOU FROM THE CITIZENS OF XUZHOU.

I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED FROM CHEN DENG.

THANK YOU, SIR.

IF YOU THINK THAT I CAN REALLY BE OF HELP TO YOU, THEN I SHALL GLADLY LEND A HAND.

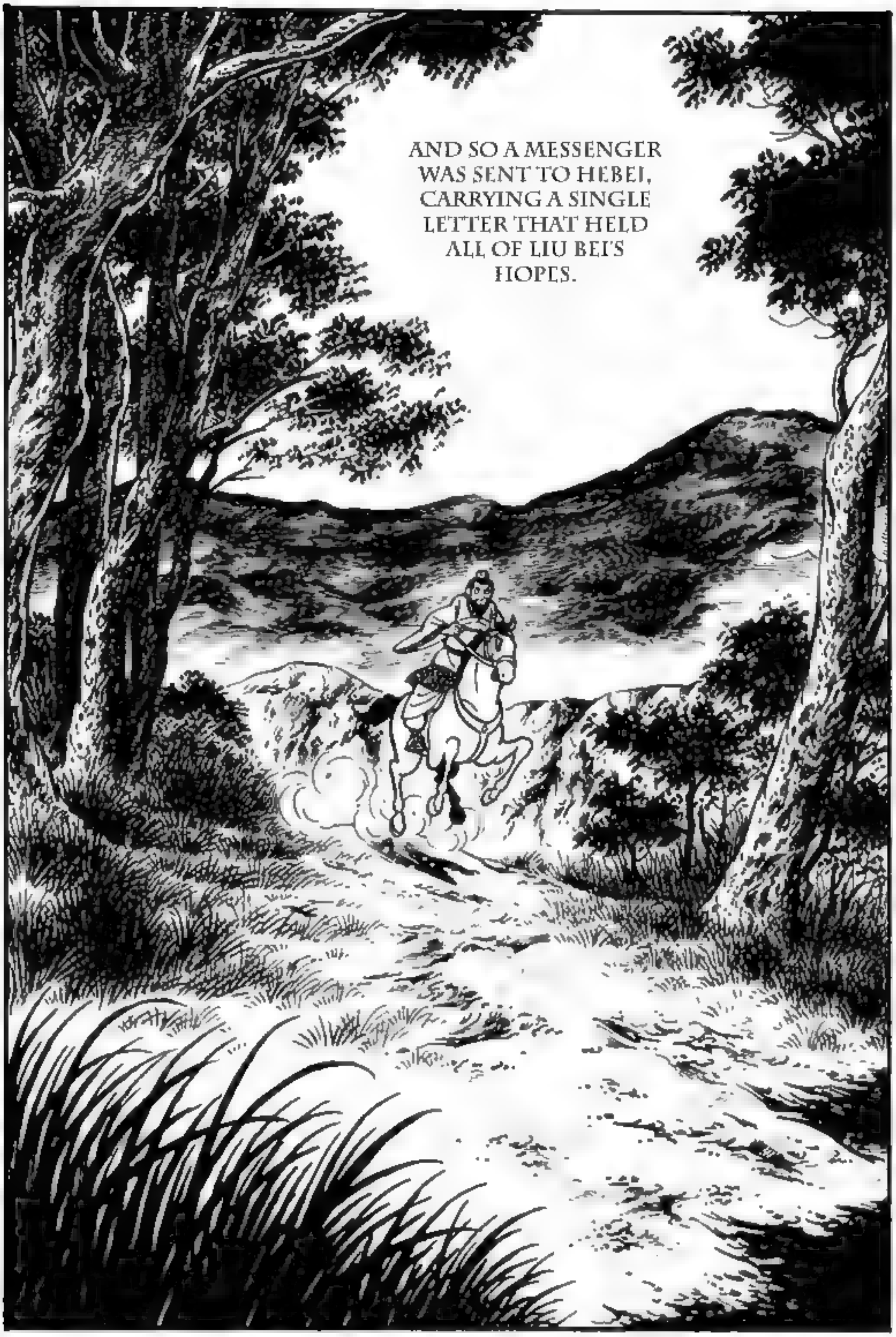
I SHALL ASK YUAN SHAO TO FORM AN ALLIANCE WITH YOU.

HERE YOU GO. I HAVE WRITTEN IN THIS LETTER FOR YUAN SHAO TO FORGET ABOUT PETTY RESENTMENTS AND WORK TOGETHER WITH SIR FOR THE GOOD OF THIS NATION.

I AM INDEBTED TO SIR.

THANK YOU. THEN I SHALL SEND THIS LETTER TO HEBEI.

I HOPE THE MATTER WILL GO WELL.


AND SO A MESSENGER WAS SENT TO HEBEI, CARRYING A SINGLE LETTER THAT HELD ALL OF LIU BEI'S HOPES.

WHAT, A MESSENGER FROM LIU BEI?

FINE, LET THE MESSENGER IN.

JUST WHAT DOES HE WANT AFTER KILLING MY BROTHER!?

SO WHAT HAVE YOU COME TO ME FOR?

I AM SUN QIAN, LIU BEI'S EMISSARY.

HA! I WONDER WHO IS THE ONE THAT'S REALLY SHAMELESS HERE.

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I'M MUCH MORE INCLINED TO WAGE WAR AGAINST LIU BEI THAN CAO CAO!

WHAT!? HE WANTS ME TO HELP HIM FIGHT CAO CAO!?

MY LORD ASKS FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH SIR IN ORDER TO FIGHT AGAINST CAO CAO, WHO SHAMELESSLY ACTS AS IF HE IS THE EMPEROR HIMSELF.

I UNDERSTAND WELL WHY SIR MAY BE ANGRY, BUT DOES SIR REALLY THINK YUAN SHU'S DEATH WAS ONLY MY LORD'S DOING? IT WAS CAO CAO, WHO USED THE EMPEROR AS HIS OWN PUPPET TO MAKE AN IMPERIAL DECREE, FORCING MY LORD TO HUNT DOWN AND EXECUTE YUAN SHU.

I GUESS IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT A MAN LIKE LIU BEI WOULD NOT JUST STAND BY AND WATCH HIS TYRANNY.

HMM, I AM WELL AWARE THAT CAO CAO CURRENTLY RULES THE IMPERIAL COURT WITH AN IRON FIST.

I HAVE ALSO BROUGHT A LETTER FROM ZHENG XUAN.

YES, AND SO I HOPE SIR WILL RECONSIDER.

ZHENG XUAN!?

AH!

THIS IS HIS LETTER, SIR.

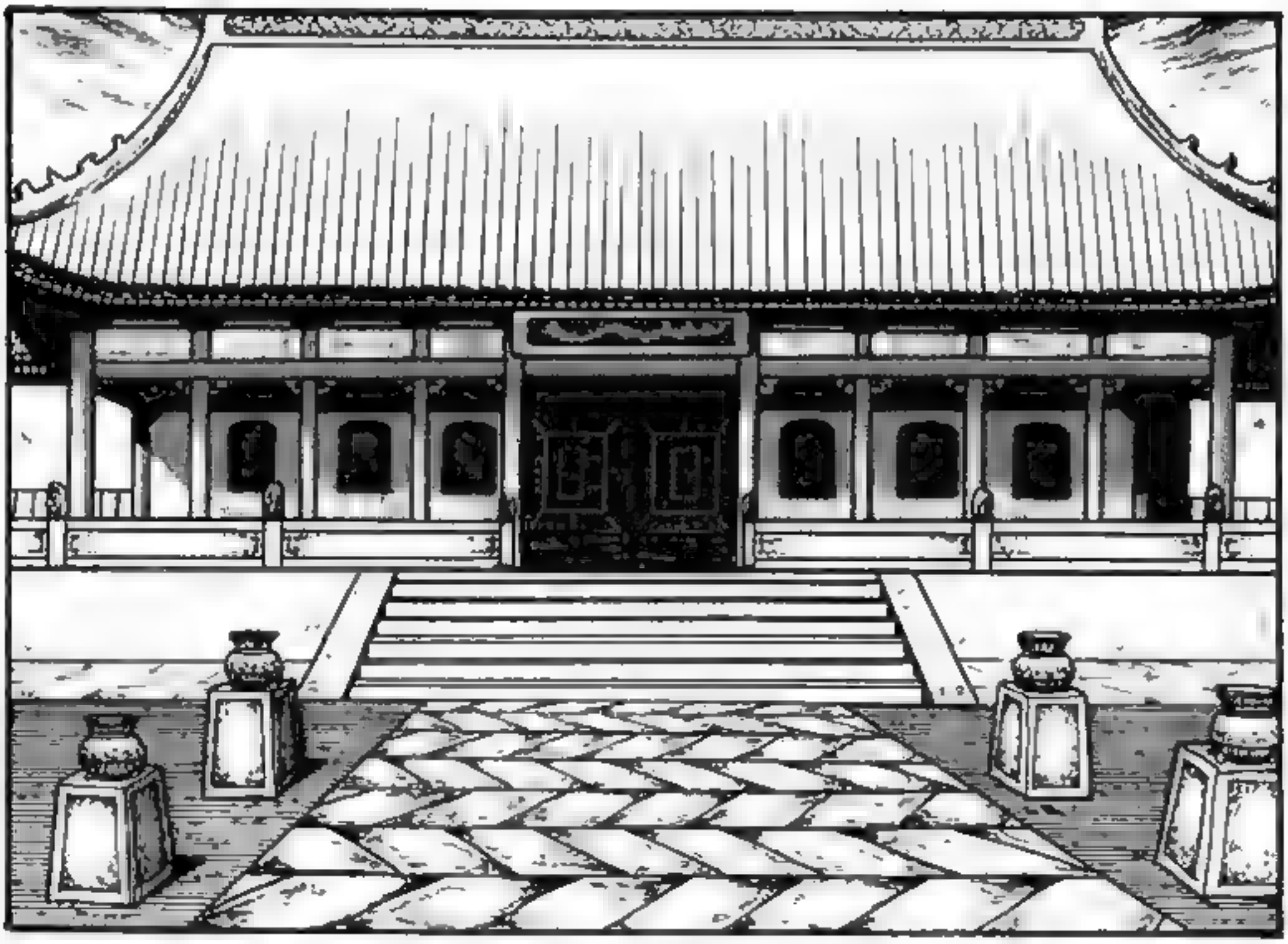
I MUST HAVE SOME TIME TO THINK, COME BACK TOMOR-ROW.

HMM...

YES, SIR.

YES, SIR.

CALL UP ALL MY OFFICERS AT ONCE.



I AM STRONGLY OPPOSED TO WAGING WAR AT THE MOMENT, MY LORD.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STATE YOUR HONEST OPINIONS ON THIS ISSUE.

I HAVE CALLED YOU GENTLEMEN HERE TO DISCUSS WHETHER WE SHOULD WAGE WAR AGAINST CAO CAO OR NOT.

WE MUST WAIT AND LET OUR ECONOMY IMPROVE AND STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES BEFORE WAGING ANOTHER WAR. I BELIEVE THAT WAITING JUST 3 MORE YEARS BEFORE FIGHTING CAO CAO WILL BE MOST WISE.

AFTER YEARS OF CONSTANT WAR, OUR GRANARIES ARE ALMOST EMPTY AND THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF OUR CITIZENS ARE NOT IN THE BEST OF CONDITIONS.

AFTER CONQUERING GONGSUN ZAN'S TERRI-TORIES, WE ARE MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER. THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR AT ALL.

I OPPOSE WHAT TIAN FENG HERE JUST SAID!

AS BRAVE AND BOLD AS THAT PLAN MAY SOUND, IT IS MUCH TOO RECKLESS, MY LORD.

STANDING BY AND TAKING NO ACTION FOR 3 YEARS IS JUST RIDICULOUS! WE MUST ATTACK CAO CAO NOW BEFORE HE GROWS ANY MORE POWERFUL!

YES!

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE JUST AFRAID OF CAO CAO.

WHAT!?

I URGE MY LORD TO KEEP THAT IN MIND.

CAO CAO IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. WITH THE EMPEROR AND IMPERIAL COURT TIGHTLY WITHIN HIS GRASP, WE SHALL MAKE THE ENTIRETY OF HAN INTO OUR ENEMIES IF WE WAGE WAR.

ARGUING WITH A TIMID MAN LIKE YOU IS JUST USELESS.

HMPH, SOUNDS LIKE MORE OF AN EXCUSE TO ME!

TAKING ON CAO CAO WILL REQUIRE A VAST AMOUNT OF RESOURCES AND PEOPLE.

I AM ONLY SAYING THAT WE MUST BE CAREFUL.

THOUGH FIGHTING CAO CAO IS WILL CERTAINLY BE DIFFICULT, ONE CANNOT ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS WITHOUT TAKING RISKING ANYTHING.

CAO CAO'S TYRANNY IS OBVIOUS TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS LAND. BY WAGING WAR, WE WILL CLEARLY EARN THE SUPPORT OF BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THE HEAVENS.

MOREOVER, EVEN ZHENG XUAN HAS SUGGESTED FOR MY LORD TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CAO CAO WITH LIU BEI.

PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST TO ELIMINATE CAO CAO RIGHT NOW THEN...

HMM, I CERTAINLY HAVE NO INTENTION OF BEING SATISFIED WITH RULING OVER ONLY HEBEI FOREVER.

IF THAT'S THE CASE, ALLYING MYSELF WITH LIU BEI WOULD CERTAINLY BE THE BEST OPTION.

ALRIGHT, I HAVE DECIDED TO GO TO WAR AGAINST CAO CAO!

AND SO
YUAN SHAO
MOBILIZED
AN ARMY OF
100,000

20,000
CAVALRY

AND
80,000
INFANTRY

THE DUST TRAILING BEHIND THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF CARTS CARRYING SUPPLIES COVERED ALL OF HEBEI

YUAN SHAO HAS FINALLY DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION.

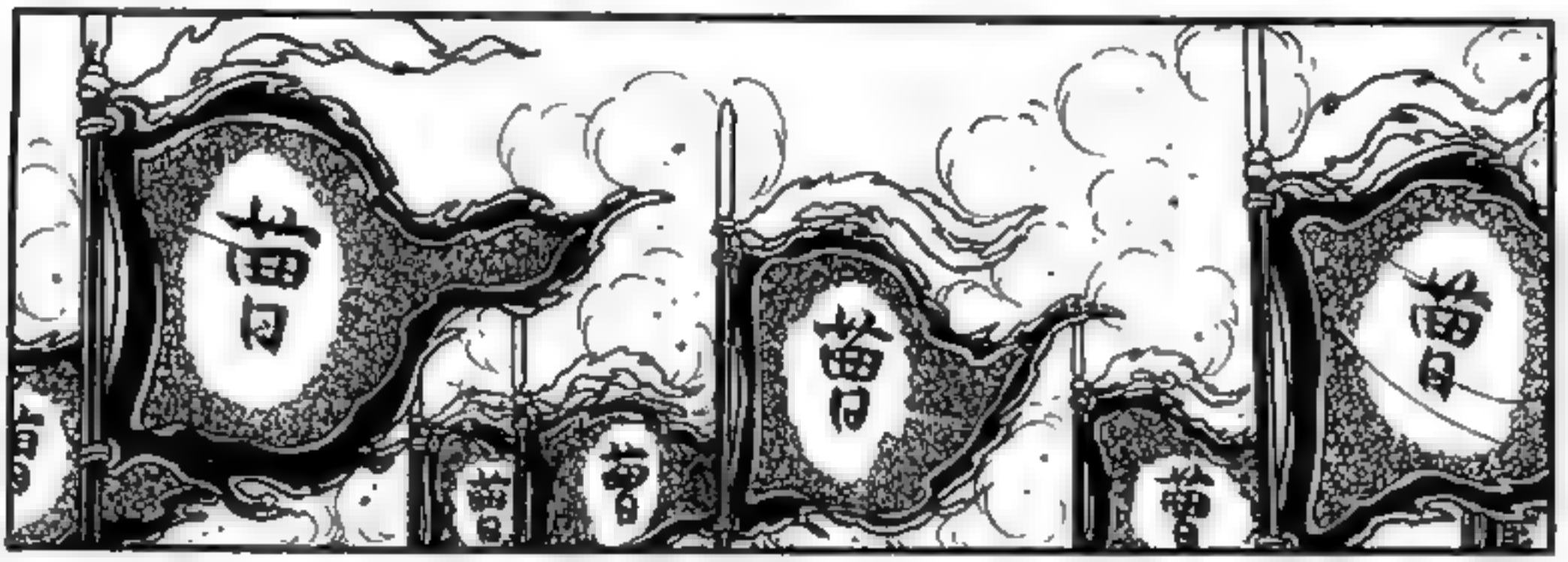
A SINGLE LETTER
HAD SUCCESSFULLY
MADE A 100,000
ARMY INTO CAO
CAO'S ENEMIES
WITHIN THE BLINK
OF AN EYE.

WORD OF YUAN SHAO'S MOBILI ZATION OF HIS ARMY NATU RALLY REACHED CAO CAO'S EARS.

TO COUNTER YUAN SHAO'S ATTACK, CAO CAO MOBI LIZED AN ARMY OF 200,000

NOW LET US MARCH FORWARD!

WE SHALL MEET THEM HEAD ON AT LIYANG!



YES, MY LORD?

GENERALS WANG ZHONG AND LIU DAI!

YES, MY LORD.

I WANT YOU TWO TO TAKE 50,000 SOLDIERS TO XUZHOU!

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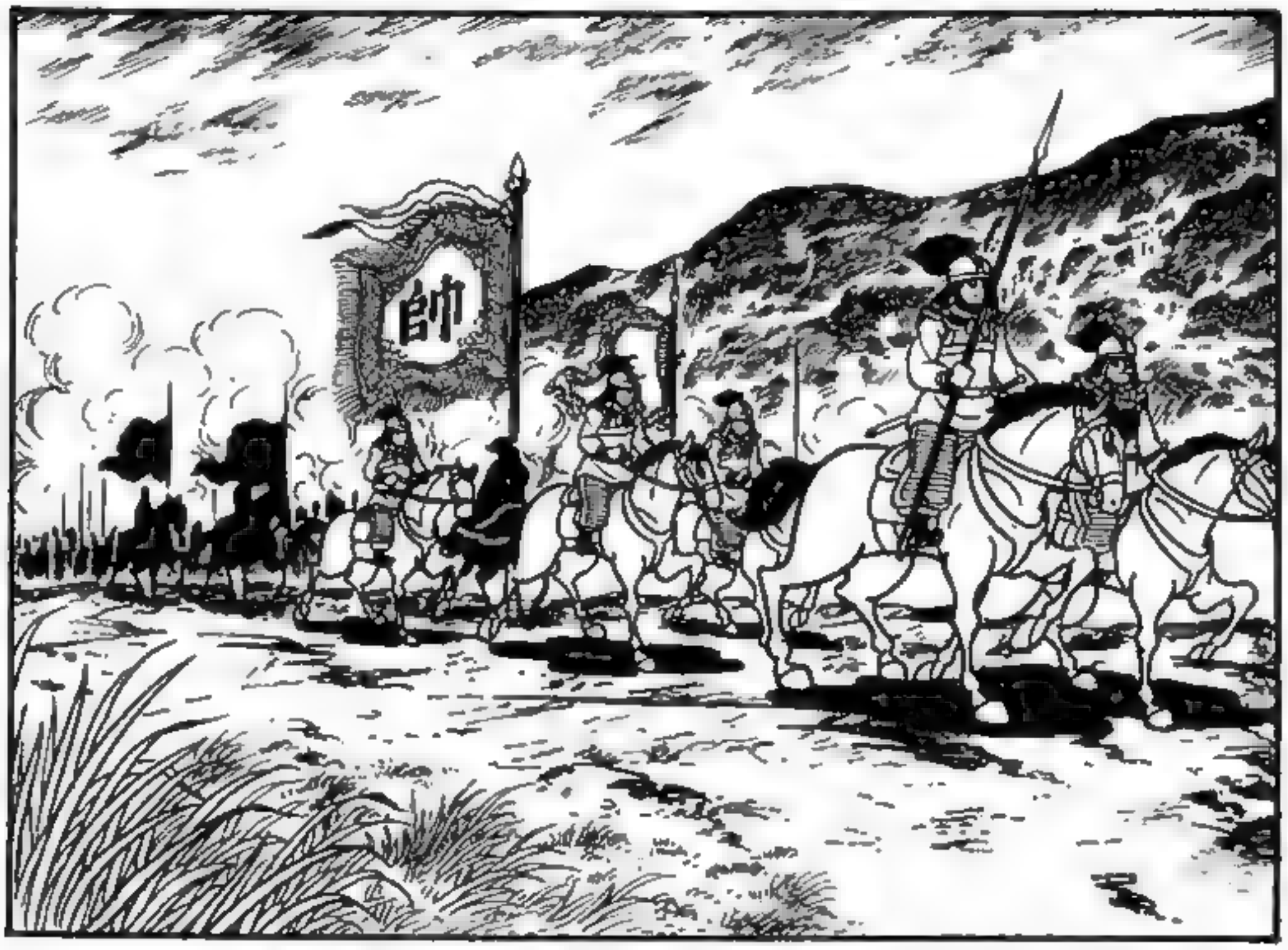
AND YOU WILL TAKE MY BANNER WITH YOU!

YES, MY LORD.

IT IS TO FOOL LIU BEI INTO BELIEVING THAT I AM AT XUZHOU. YOUR DUTIES WILL BE TO STALL FOR SOME TIME AND DRAG OUT THE BATTLE WITH LIU BEI'S FORCES.

*FLAG READS "COMMANDER"

ALRIGHT MEN, LET'S DEPART FOR XUZHOU!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YES, I KNOW.

MY LORD, LIU DAI AND WANG ZHONG ARE NO MATCH FOR LIU BEI. I SUGGEST THAT A MORE CAPABLE GENERAL BE SENT.

LIU BEI IS A CAREFUL MAN WHO KNOWS WELL OF MY CAPABILITIES. HE SHALL NOT ACT RASHLY BY ATTACKING FULL OUT ONCE HE SEES THAT BANNER.

THAT IS WHY I MADE THEM TAKE MY BANNER.

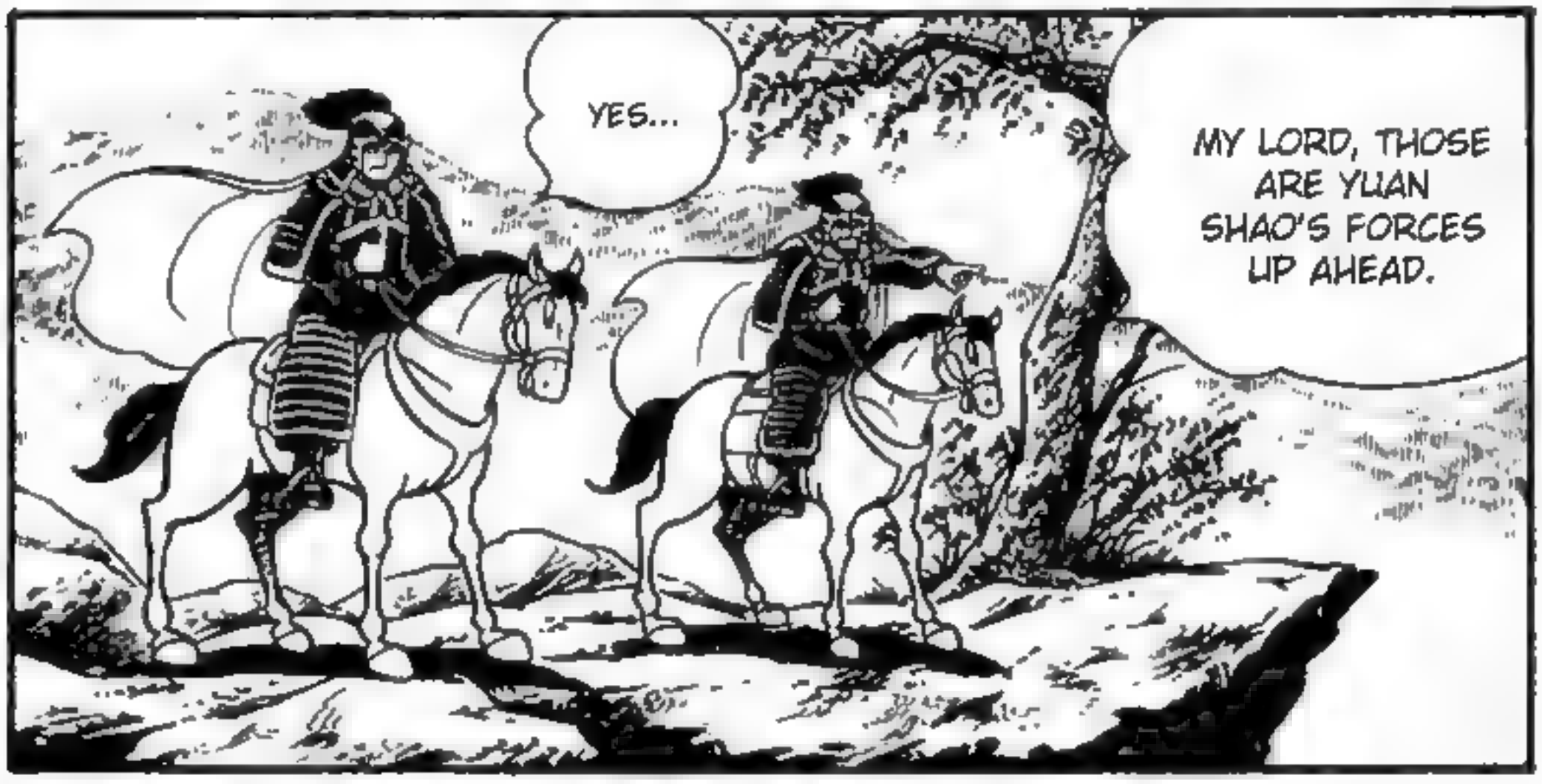
IN THE MEANWHILE, I SHALL DEAL WITH YUAN SHAO. I CAN TURN MY ATTENTION TO LIU BEI AFTER THAT.

IF WE FOCUSED ON XUZHOU FIRST, YUAN SHAO, HAVING LARGE RESOURCES, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEND FOOD AND REINFORCEMENTS TO LIU BEI. IF THAT HAPPENS, TAKING OVER XUZHOU, MUCH LESS LIYANG, WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DO. BUT WITH THIS FEINT TO TIE UP LIU BEI'S FORCES, WE CAN ACCOMPLISH BOTH OBJECTIVES.

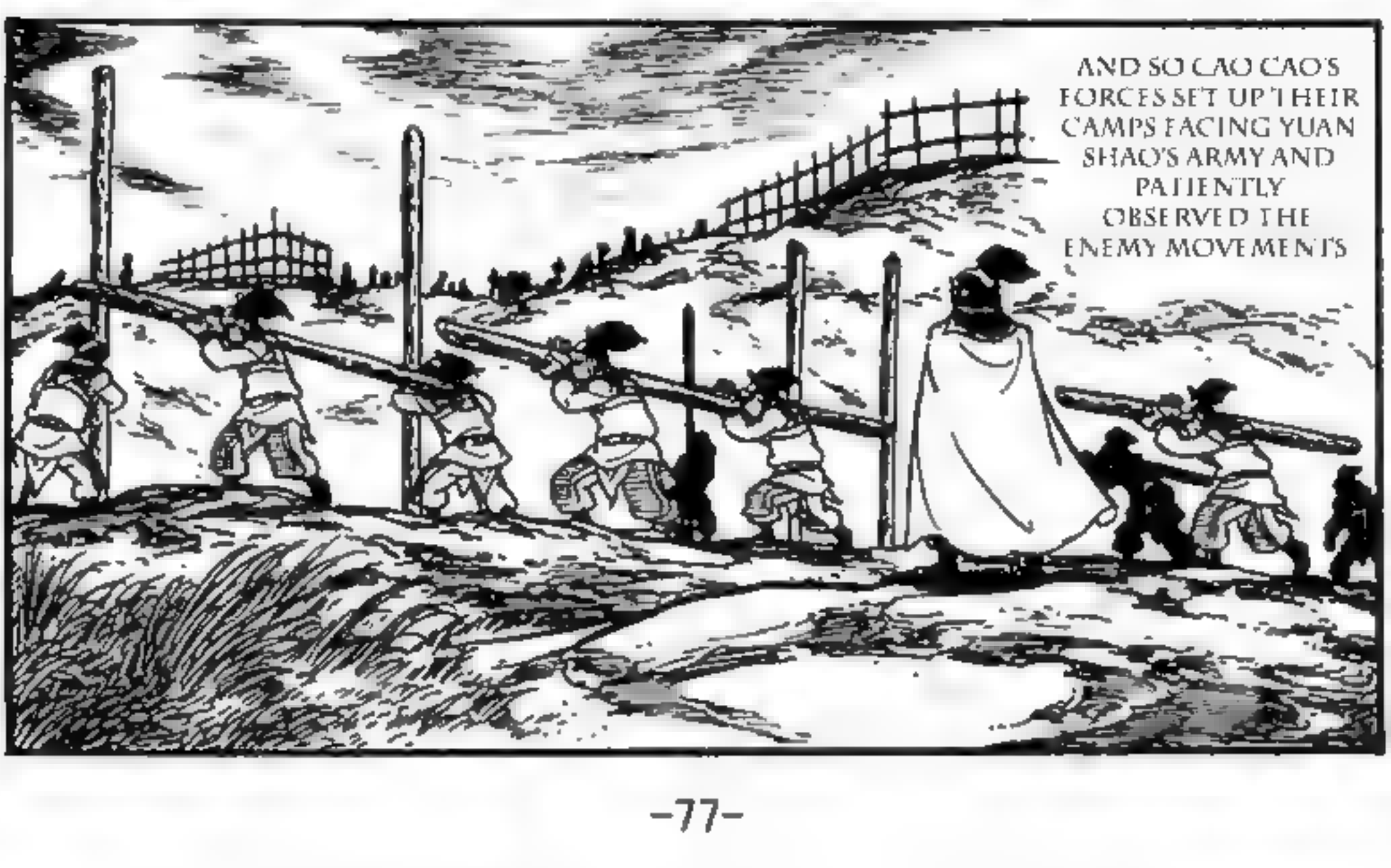
I SEE, SO THAT WAS MY LORD'S INTENTION. THE OUTCOME OF THIS WAR HINGES UPON WHETHER WE'LL BE ABLE TO DEFEAT YUAN SHAO'S FORCES OR NOT. XUZHOU SHALL FALL EASILY IF WE DEAL WITH YUAN SHAO FIRST.

ALRIGHT, MARCH!

IT'S A BRILLIANT STRATEGY ...


YES...
MY LORD, THOSE ARE YUAN SHAO'S FORCES UP AHEAD.

YES, I KNOW.
THEIR MORALE IS HIGH AND THEIR SOLDIERS ARE WELL FED RIGHT NOW. ATTACKING HEAD ON WILL ONLY LEAD TO HIGH CASUALTIES, MY LORD.
ALRIGHT, WE SHALL SET UP OUR ENCAMP-MENTS HERE FOR NOW AND WAIT FOR THE ENEMIES TO MAKE A MOVE FIRST.


AND SO CAO CAO'S FORCES SET UP THEIR CAMPS FACING YUAN SHAO'S ARMY AND PATIENTLY OBSERVED THE ENEMY MOVEMENTS

OCTOBER.
2 MONTHS HAD PASSED SINCE CAO CAO HAD SET UP BASE, BUT NEITHER SIDE SEEMED WILLING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE

SEND A SPY TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.

YES, SIR.

YES, I WONDER WHAT IS EXACTLY GOING ON?

HMM, WHY DOES YUAN SHAO NOT WANT TO FIGHT AFTER COMING THIS FAR?

THAT NIGHT, CAO CAO'S SPIES SECRETLY CROSSED ENEMY LINES TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE FOR THE DELAY

MY LORD, THE SPIES HAVE RETURNED.

AH, GOOD.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?

THE GENERAL PLACED IN COMMAND BY YUAN SHAO IS A MAN NAMED FENG JI. BUT AFTER HE FELL ILL, GENERAL SHEN PEI TOOK OVER AS THE COMMANDER.

GENERAL SHEN PEI HAPPENS TO BE ON BAD TERMS WITH XU YOU, WHO IS REFUSING TO FOLLOW ORDERS. AS A RESULT, THEIR ENTIRE CAMP SEEMS TO BE BUSY ARGUING AMONGST THEMSELVES RIGHT NOW.

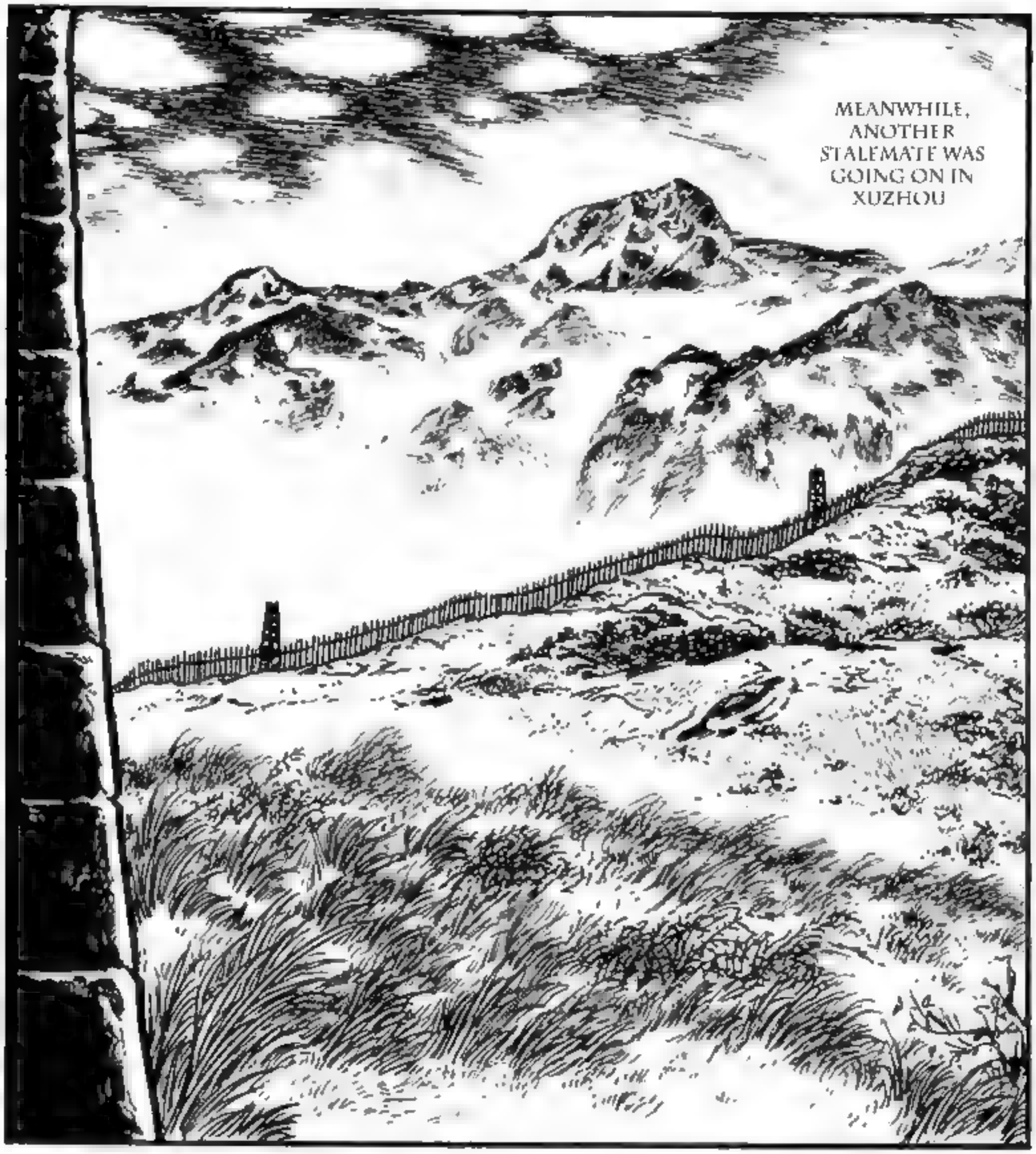
YOU FORGET THAT YUAN SHAO ALWAYS WAS AN INDECISIVE MAN...

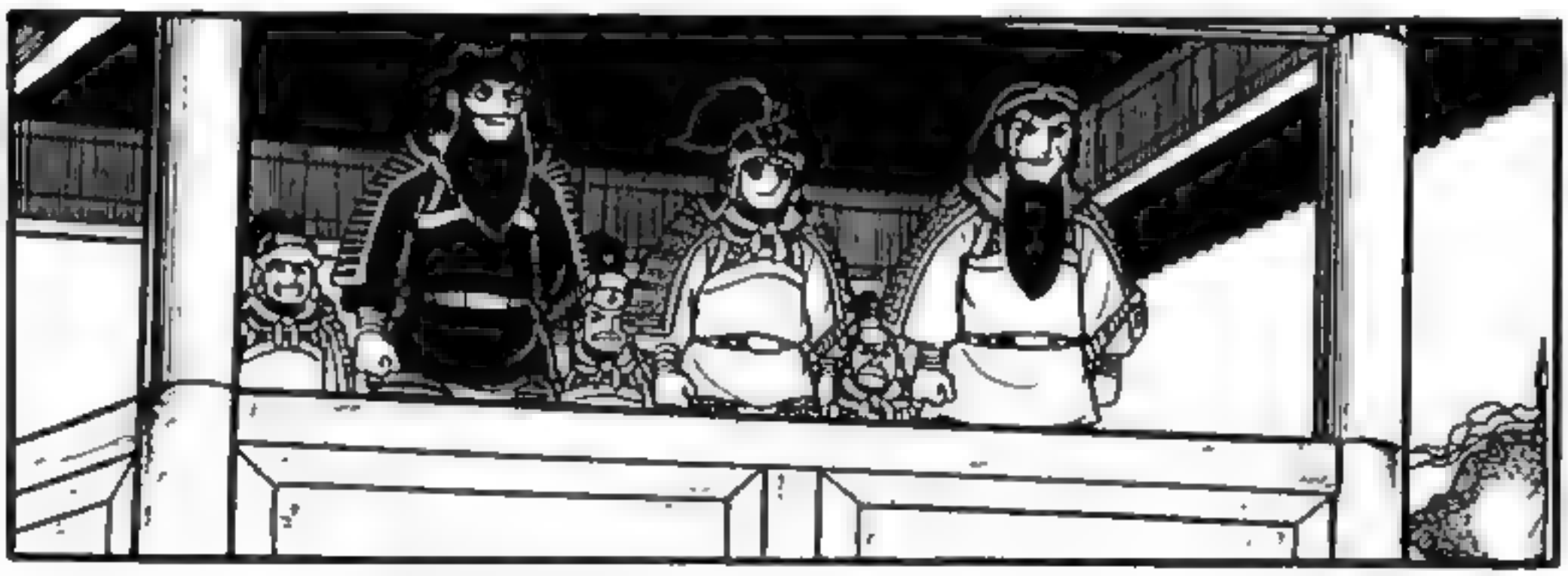
BUT ISN'T YUAN SHAO WITH THEM!?

HAHAHA, AT THIS RATE, WE'LL BE able TO ACHIEVE VICTORY WITHOUT EVEN HAVING TO LIFT A FINGER.

HE'S PROBABLY AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT TO DO WITH ALL HIS GENERALS AND ADVISORS BICKERING AMONGST THEMSELVES.

THE EVER PERCEPTIVE CAO CAO QUICKLY RETURNED TO XUCHANG. HE WAS MUCH MORE WORRIED ABOUT HOW THINGS WERE GOING ON AT XUZHOU AT THE TIME


MEANWHILE, ANOTHER STALEMATE WAS GOING ON IN XUZHOU



HMM...

WHY IS CAO CAO NOT BOTHERING TO ATTACK AFTER COMING THIS FAR?

WHY NOT?

NO.

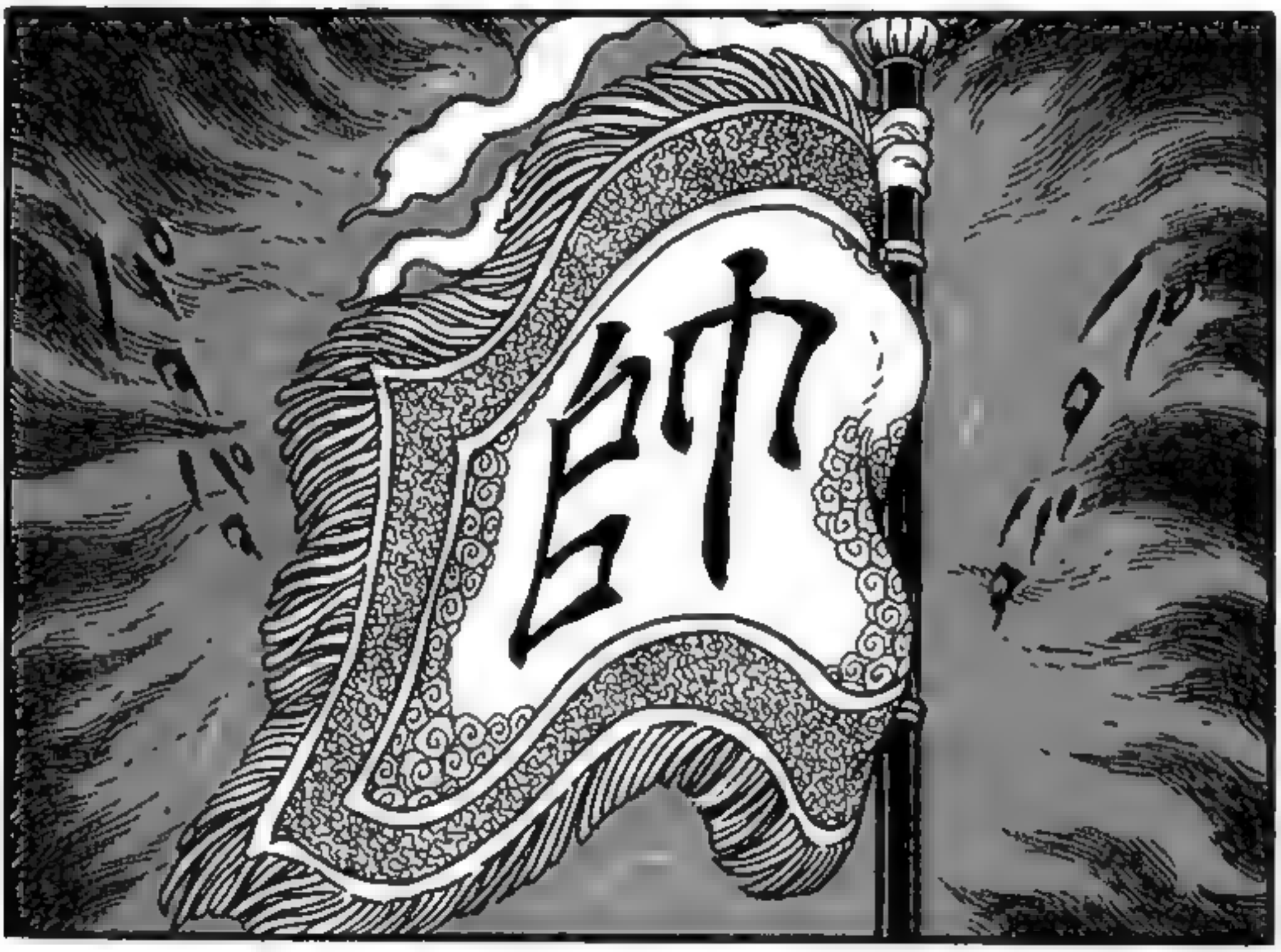
MAYBE IT'D BE BETTER IF WE MADE THE FIRST MOVE, BROTHER.

CAO CAO HAS THE IMPERIAL COURT WITHIN HIS HAND.

IF WE MAKE THE FIRST MOVE, IT WILL GIVE CAO CAO A LEGITIMATE EXCUSE TO LABEL US AS REBELS OF HAN.

BUT... SOMETHING ABOUT THAT BANNER IS SUSPICIOUS ...

ONCE THAT HAPPENS, WE WILL HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST ALL THE OTHER LORDS OF HAN.



DRAWING STRAWS

AFTER TAKING MY LORD'S BANNER, THEY HAVE ENTRENCHED THEMSELVES A 100 LI AWAY FROM XUZHOU CASTLE AND HAVE ONLY BEEN CLOSELY OBSERVING THE ENEMIES' MOVEMENTS.

WHAT?

THOSE FOOLS!

YOU MEAN THEY HAVEN'T EVEN TRIED TO ATTACK ONCE?

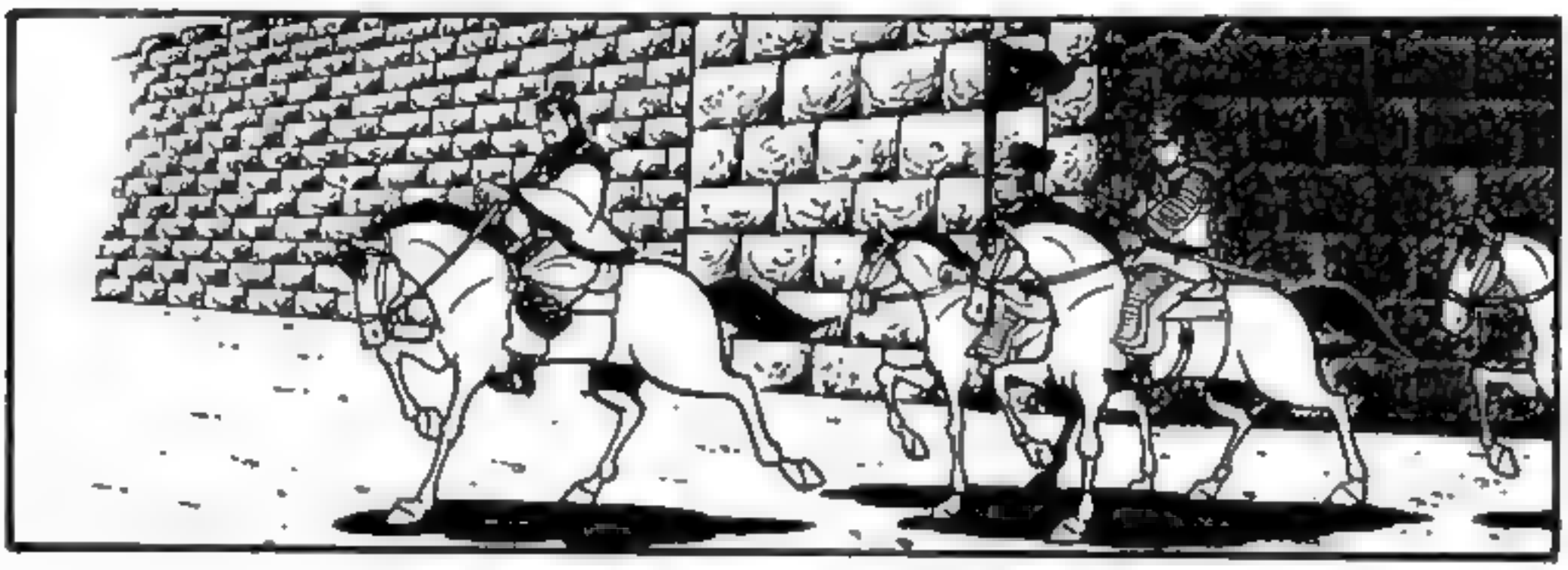
I TOLD THEM TO STALL THE BATTLE BUT I NEVER TOLD THEM TO NOT ATTACK EVEN A SINGLE TIME!

JUST HOW DENSE CAN THOSE IDIOTS GET...

BY JUST SITTING STILL, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT LIU BEI WILL GROW SUSPICIOUS AND EVENTUALLY FIND OUT THAT I'M NOT REALLY THERE.

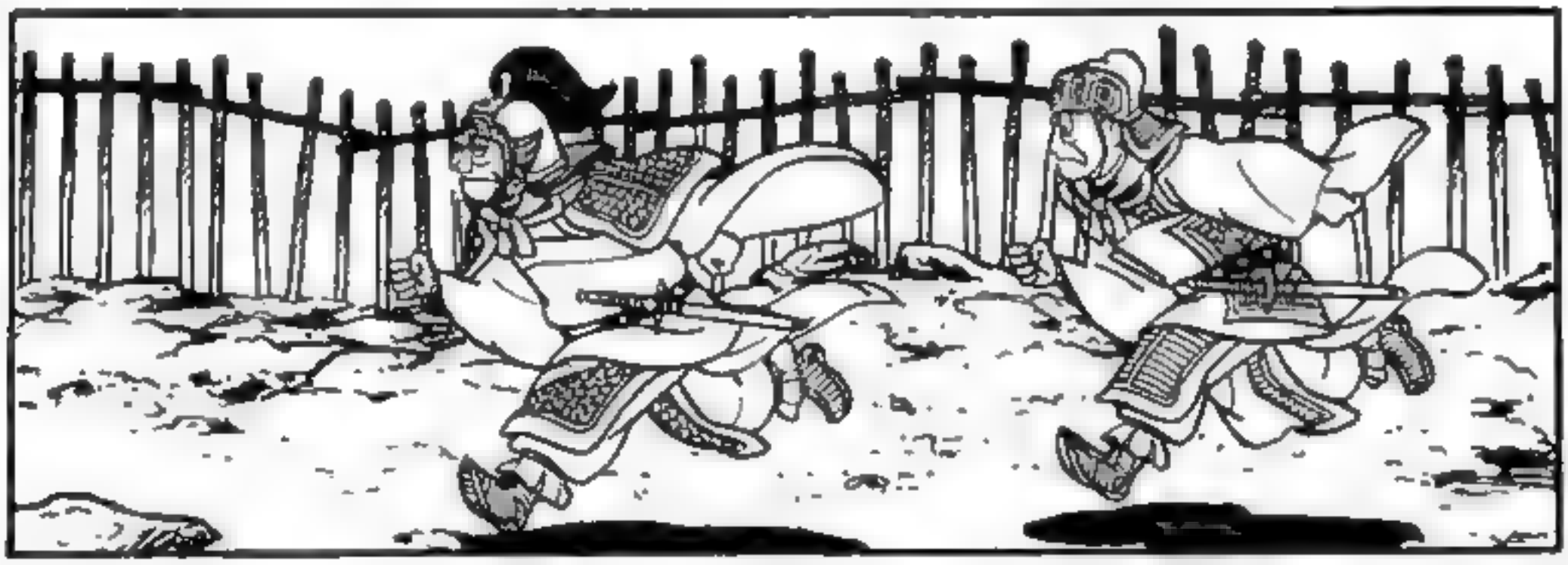
YES, SIR.

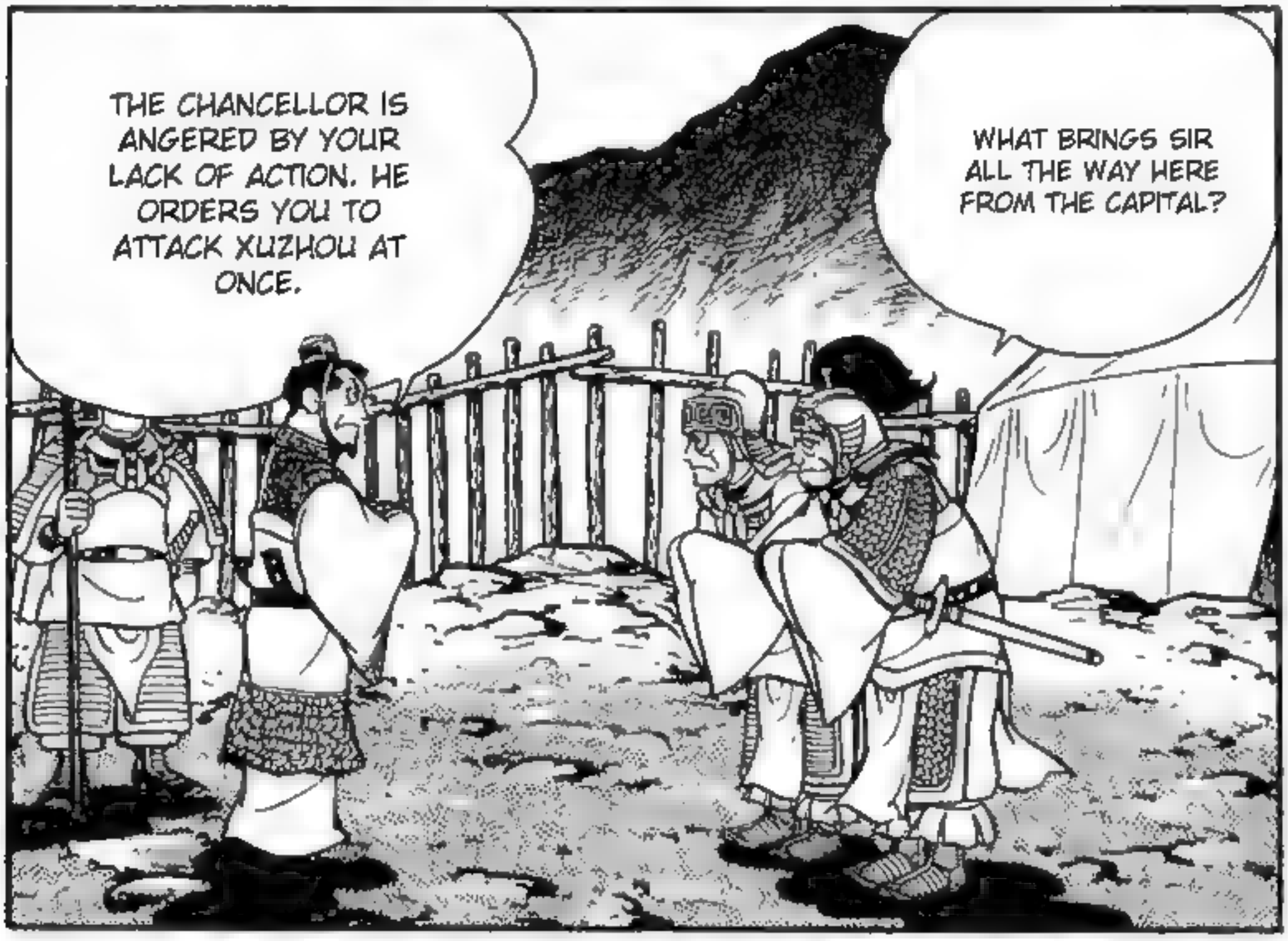
ORDER THEM TO ATTACK AT ONCE.



HMM?

A MESSENGER HAS ARRIVED FROM THE CAPITAL, GENERAL.




THE CHANCELLOR IS ANGERED BY YOUR LACK OF ACTION. HE ORDERS YOU TO ATTACK XUZHOU AT ONCE.
WHAT BRINGS SIR ALL THE WAY HERE FROM THE CAPITAL?

I WAS ACTUALLY THINKING THAT MYSELF AS WELL...
O-OF COURSE!

W-W-WAIT, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN PLACED AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THIS FRONT? IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT YOU LEAD THE FIRST OFFENSIVE.

GENERAL WANG ZHONG, PLEASE LEAD THE ATTACK, IF YOU WILL.

W-WHAT!? ARE YOU THINKING OF ME AS A DISPOS-ABLE LACKEY OF YOURS!?

IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE THAT I AM THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THAT I CANNOT JUST CHARGE IN THE COMMANDER CAN'T BE LEADING THE FRONT-LINES, AFTER ALL.

ENOUGH! ARGUING AMONGST YOURSELVES WON'T GET US ANYWHERE.

IF YOU INSIST...

I SUGGEST DRAWING STRAWS TO PICK WHO WILL LEAD THE FIRST ATTACK.

BREATHE IN... BREATHE OUT...

THE ONE WHO DRAWS THE LONGER STICK WILL HAVE TO LEAD THE FIRST ATTACK.

ONE, TWO! ONE TWO!

ALRIGHT, THEN.

LET'S SEE...

AHEM, I WISH YOU GOOD LUCK, WANG ZHONG.

HAHA! MINE'S SHORTER!

Y-YES...

THERE, IT'S BEEN SETTLED FAIRLY SO I ASSUME THERE'S NO COMPLAINTS?

徐
MY LORD, GENERAL WANG ZHONG'S FORCES HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE. I BELIEVE THEY WILL ATTACK VERY SOON.

AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT CAO CAO IS PRESENT HERE RIGHT NOW, DESPITE HIS BANNER BEING HERE.

I SEE. WELL, THAT EXPLAINS A LOT. THERE'S NO WAY CAO CAO WOULD'VE JUST KEPT QUIET FOR 2 MONTHS.

WAIT.

ALRIGHT BROTHER, WANT ME TO GO OUT AND DESTROY THEM?

BUT WE'LL BE KILLED IF WE DON'T FIGHT BACK!

REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT BECOMING REBELS OF HAN?

MNN...

YES, I AGREE WITH ZHANG FEI.

IF THEY'RE ALREADY ATTACKING US, WE'RE NOT LEFT WITH MUCH OF A CHOICE, BROTHER.

YES.

WE CAN THINK OF A BETTER COURSE OF ACTION ONCE WE ASCERTAIN THOSE TWO THINGS.

THEN HOW ABOUT WE ATTACK THEM JUST ENOUGH TO JUDGE THEIR TRUE STRENGTHS AND SEE IF CAO CAO IS REALLY HERE OR NOT?

YES.

ALRIGHT, I'LL ENTRUST YOU WITH THAT TASK THEN.

BROTHER, CAN'T I GO ALONG WITH GUAN YU?

ZHANG FEI, JUST BE A LITTLE PATIENT FOR NOW. YOUR TIME WILL COME SOON ENOUGH.

NO, I FEAR THAT THE MATTER WILL BECOME MORE TROUBLESOME IF YOU DO.

MOVE OUT, MEN!

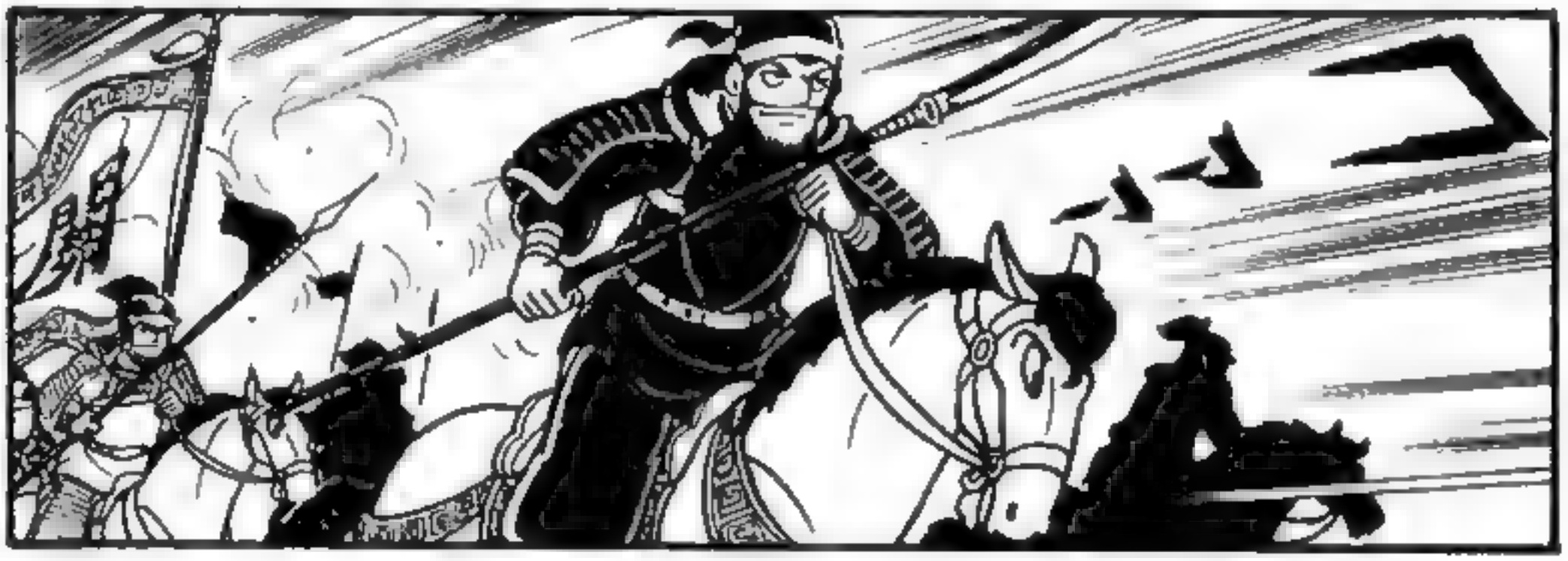
THIS IS A BATTLE TO GAUGE THE ENEMIES' STRENGTHS. DO NOT RUSH IN TOO DEEPLY FOR WE WILL BE RETREATING AFTER A SHORT WHILE.

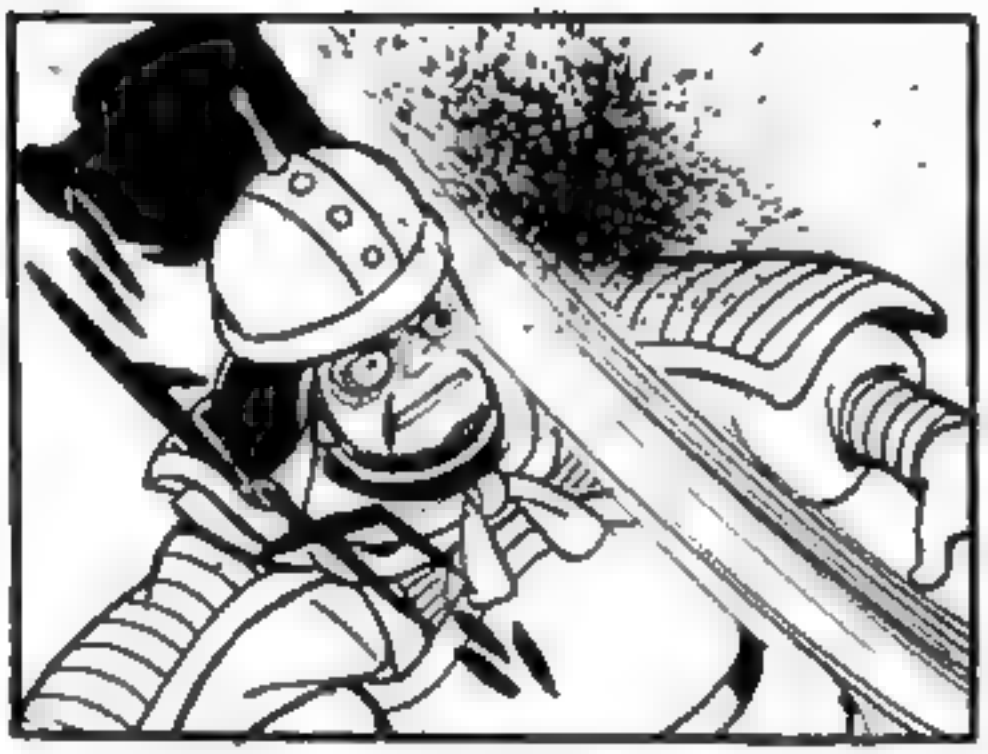
WHAT!?
GENERAL, ENEMY FORCES HAVE COME OUT FROM THEIR CASTLE!

HMM?

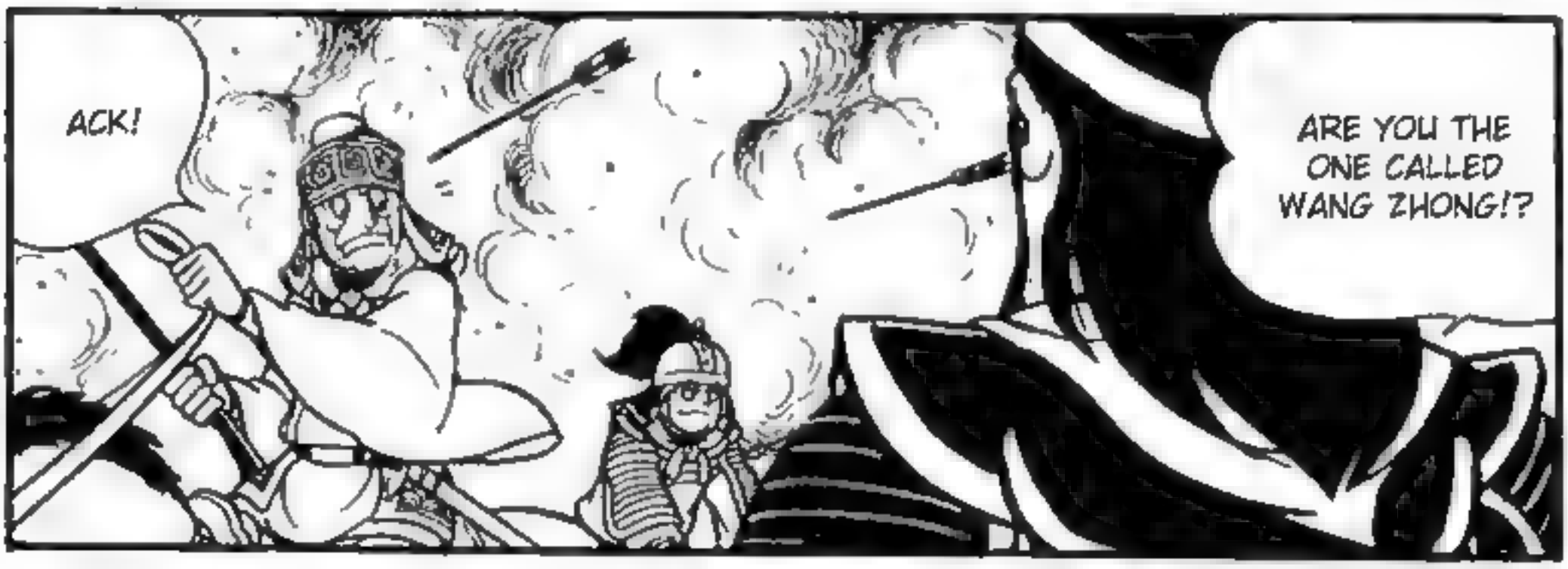
ALRIGHT MEN! LET US MEET THEM HEAD ON!

WHY'RE THEY ATTACKING NOW SO SUD-DENLY?





HMM?


ACK!
ARE YOU THE ONE CALLED WANG ZHONG!?

SILENCE! DO YOU NOT SEE THE BANNER OF THE CHANCELLOR BEHIND ME!? SURRENDER AT ONCE!

COME AT ME, I'LL GLADLY TAKE YOU ON.

WHAT IMPUDENCE! AS IF THE CHANCELLOR WOULD FIGHT WITH A LOWLY DOG SUCH AS YOURSELF!

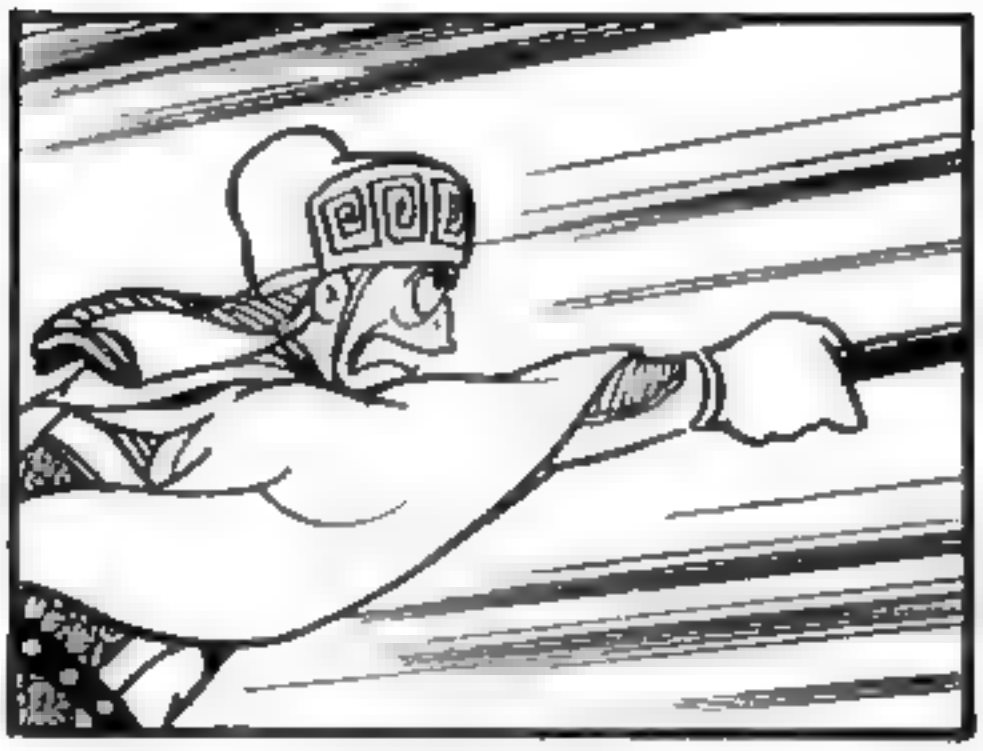
IS THAT SO? THEN BRING THE CHANCELLOR FORTH, I WOULDN'T MIND FIGHTING HIM EITHER.

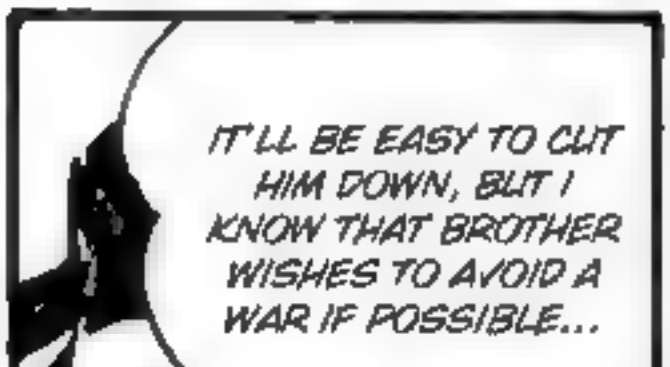
I SHAN'T LET YOU GO!

NGHHH, HOW DARE YOU MAKE A FOOL OUT OF ME...!

YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF ME, ARE YOU?

THEN I GUESS YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO DO.




IT'LL BE EASY TO CUT HIM DOWN, BUT I KNOW THAT BROTHER WISHES TO AVOID A WAR IF POSSIBLE...

THEN THE BEST THING TO DO HERE WOULD BE TO TAKE HIM PRISONER.

HMM.

AGHH!

RUNNING AWAY!?

UGH, I CAN'T KEEP UP WITH HIM!

YOU COWARD! COME BACK HERE AT ONCE!

STOP! I MUST TAKE YOUR HEAD BACK!

NOW, TIME TO GET A LITTLE MORE SERIOUS.

THIS SHOULD BE GOOD ENOUGH...

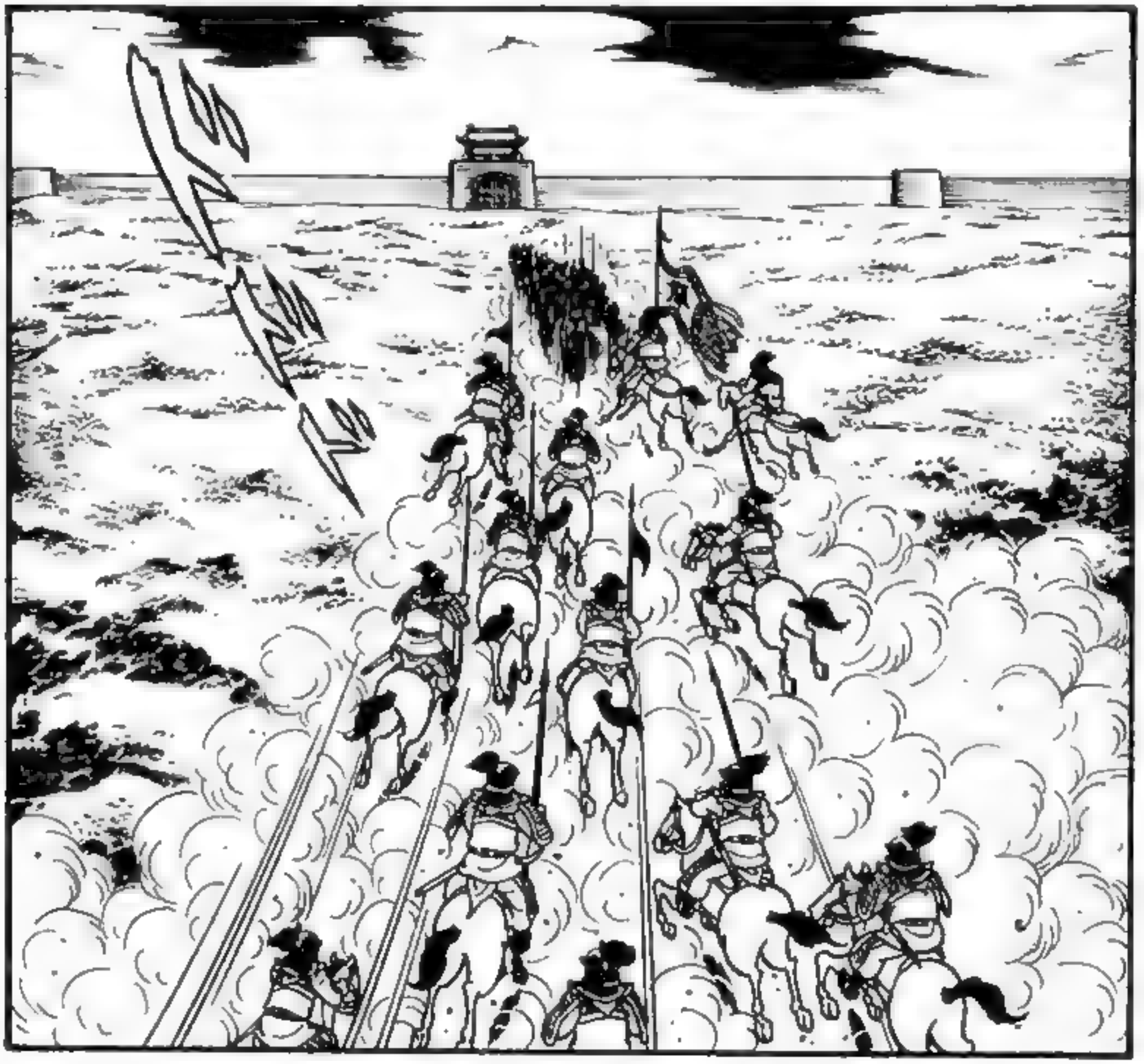
NGHHH!

AHH!

GAHH!

AGHHHHH!

THE ENEMY GENERAL HAS BEEN CAUGHT! RETREAT!



I... I ONLY DID THAT UNDER THE CHANCELLOR'S DIRECT ORDERS.
WANG ZHONG, WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT THE CHANCELLOR'S BANNER WHEN HE IS NOT HERE? YOU ARE AWARE THAT IS A SERIOUS CRIME, RIGHT?

YOU'LL REGRET IT IF YOU KILL ME! THE CHANCELLOR WILL COME TO DESTROY ALL OF XUZHOU ONCE HE VANQUISHES YUAN SHAO'S FORCES!

BUT I NEVER INTENDED TO FIGHT AGAINST THE CHANCELLOR.

PERHAPS.

AND SO I HAVE NO INTENTION OF KILLING YOU AS WELL. I SHALL NOW UNTIE YOUR ROPES.

THIS WAY, SIR.

GIVE WANG ZHONG HERE SOME COMFORTABLE CLOTHES TO CHANGE INTO AND A MEAL. I'M SURE HE'S QUITE HUNGRY.

W-WHAT'S GOING ON...?

LISTEN WELL, GENTLEMEN. WHAT I DESIRE IS PEACE, NOT WAR.

IT WILL ONLY INCUR CAO CAO'S WRATH EVEN FURTHER.

BUT KILLING THEM WON'T DO US AN OUNCE OF GOOD.

KILLING GENERALS WANG ZHONG AND LIU DAI IS AN EASY TASK.

WELL SAID, BROTHER.

BY KEEPING THEM ALIVE, WE MAY BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE A CEASEFIRE WITH CAO CAO IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

YES.

SHALL WE GO AND CATCH LIU DAI AS WELL THEN?

WELL, UMM... I FEAR THAT YOUR SHORT TEMPER MIGHT GET THE BEST OUT OF YOU.

I THINK GUAN YU MIGHT BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR CATCHING SOMEONE ALIVE.

ALLOW ME TO TAKE CARE OF THAT, BROTHER.

A-AH, NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.

W-WHAT!? ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU CAN'T TRUST ME AT ALL, BROTHER!?

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. I'LL ENTRUST THIS TASK TO YOU.

THEN WHY WON'T YOU LET ME DO THIS!?

HMPH, DOES HE REALLY THINK OF ME AS SOME BRUTE WHO CAN'T EVEN CATCH A SINGLE ENEMY ALIVE?

ALRIGHT, LISTEN UP!

WE'LL BE MOVING OUT NOW TO CATCH THE ENEMY COMMANDER LIU DAI ALIVE!

I SHALL NOT FORGIVE ANY WHO FAILS TO FOLLOW EVEN A SINGLE ORDER!

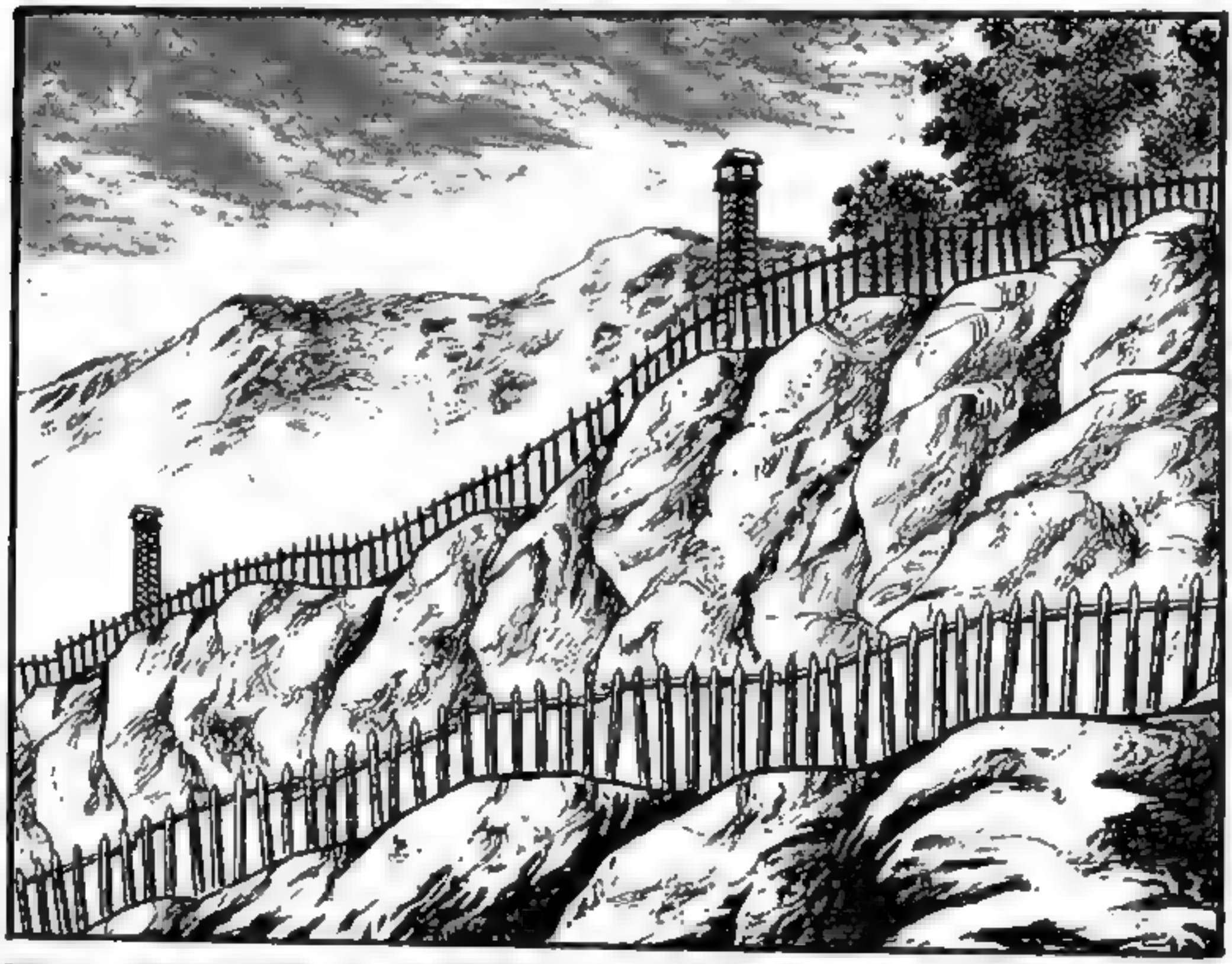
KNOW ME AS A STRICT COMMANDER WHO WILL SEE TO IT THAT EVERY SINGLE RULE OF OUR MILITARY LAW BE KEPT!

IF YOU GOT THAT, THEN MARCH!

.....

.....

ZHANG FEI'S STRATAGEM



WELL DON'T JUST STAND THERE! HURRY UP AND PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

YOU MEAN THAT BRUTISH HOOLIGAN ...?

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT THAT VIOLENT AND RECKLESS ZHANG FEI MIGHT DO. TIGHTEN ALL DEFENCES!

SIR, THE ENEMIES ARE ONLY SHOOTING ARROWS AT US AND REFUSE TO COME OUT TO FIGHT US HEAD ON.

HMM...

CATCHING LIU DAI WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE AS IT IS RIGHT NOW.

ALRIGHT MEN, POUR ON THE INSULTS UNTIL LIU DAI AND HIS MEN CAN'T STAND IT ANYMORE!

ARE YOU AND YOUR BIG ARMY AFRAID OF A MERE 3000 SOLDIERS!?

HEY LIU DAI, YOU SCAREDY CAT!

WE DIDN'T COME HERE TO FIGHT WOMEN!
DO YOU EVEN HAVE ANY BALLS!?
COME ON YOU BIG SISSIES!

SIR, WE CAN'T STAND THIS ANYMORE! PLEASE ALLOW US TO GO AND FIGHT!

NGHH...!

AS LONG AS WE STAY PUT HERE AND MAINTAIN OUR DEFENSES, THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO DO A SINGLE THING!

D-DON'T BE FOOLISH! THIS IS JUST THE ENEMY'S PLAN TO MAKE US LEAVE OUR SUPERIOR DEFENSIVE POSITION.

GO BACK HOME TO YOUR MOMMIES!

PANSIES!

RETARDS!

THEN IT LOOKS LIKE THE ONLY OPTION WE'VE GOT IS TO DO A SUPRISE RAID AT NIGHT.

HMM...

SIR, THE ENEMIES STILL SHOW NO SIGNS OF COMING OUT AND ATTACKING.

ALRIGHT MEN, TAKE A BREAK UNTIL NIGHTFALL! YOU MAY DRINK AND PARTY AS MUCH AS YOU WANT UNTIL THEN!

HAHA, NOW THAT'S MY KIND OF GENERAL!

DID HE JUST SAY WE COULD DRINK?

SIR, THE ENEMIES ARE DRINKING RIGHT IN FRONT OF US!

NO, NO. THIS MUST BE A TRAP. THEY'RE TRYING TO LURE US OUT LIKE BEFORE.

GENERAL, THERE'LL BE NO BETTER CHANCE THAN NOW TO DESTROY THEM!

AHAHA

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

COMING, GENERAL!

HEY! I'M OUT OF BOOZE OVER HERE!

AGHH!

P-PLEASE FORGIVE ME SIR, IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!

YOU LITTLE...!

TIE HIM UP TO THE POST!

YOU IMBECILE!

ABSO-LUTELY NOT!

PLEASE! FORGIVE ME, SIR!

AGHH!

A PUN-ISHMENT IS IN ORDER!

SIR, THERE SEEMS TO BE A COMMOTION OF SOME TYPE IN THE ENEMY CAMPS!

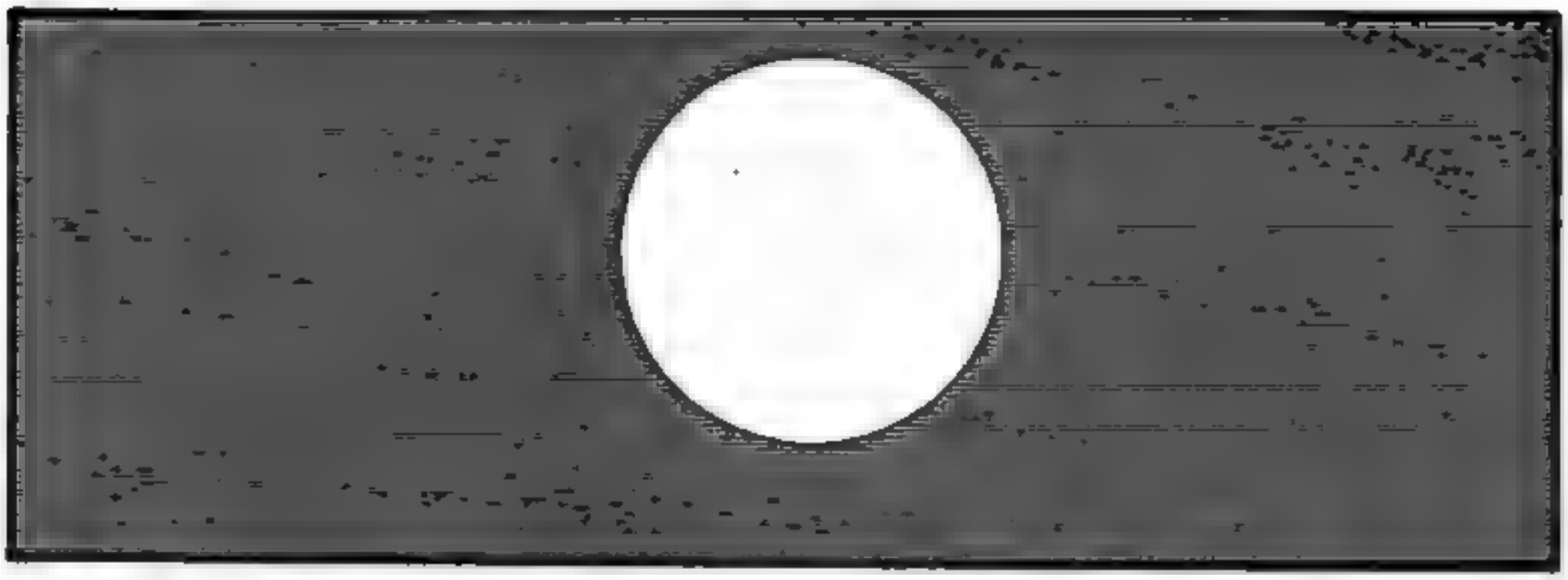
AHHHH!

HELP!

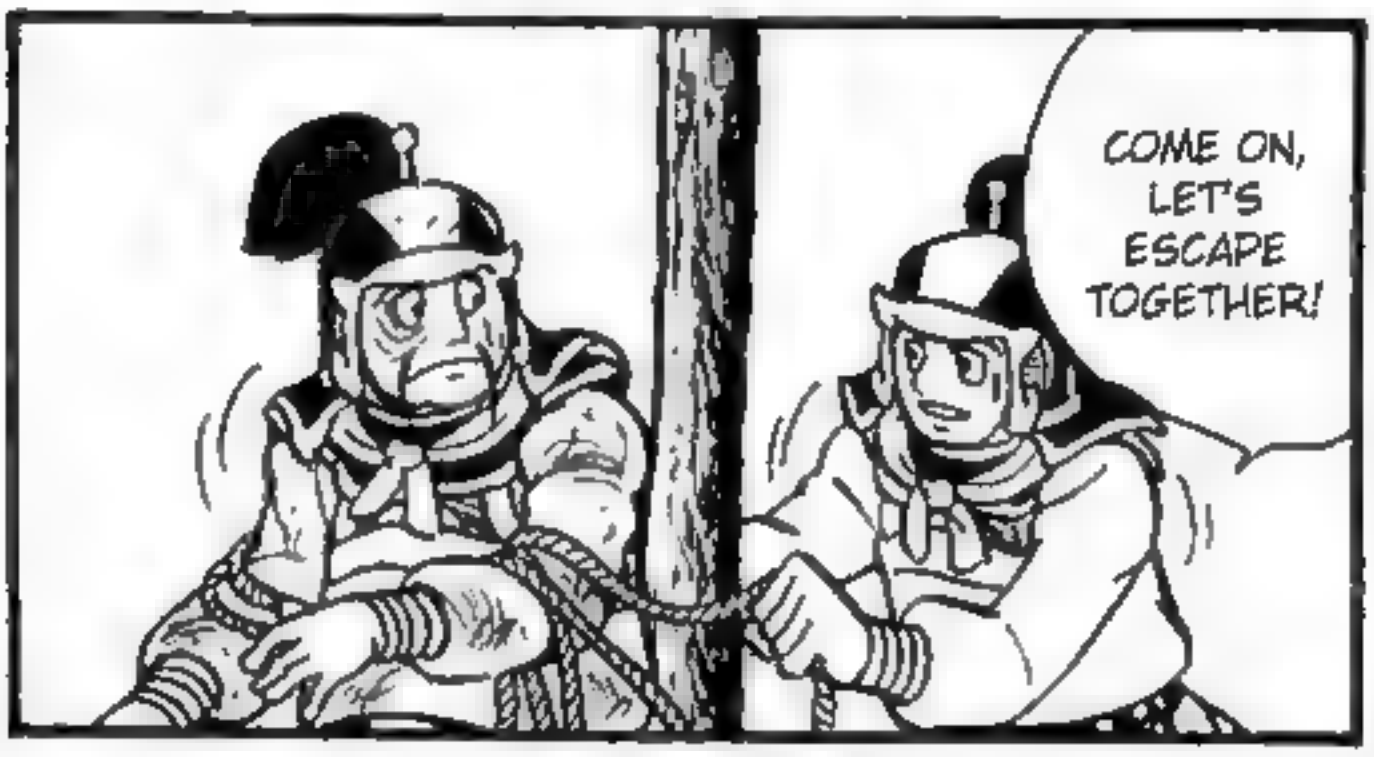
IT LOOKS AS IF ZHANG FEI'S ON ONE OF HIS DRUNKEN RAM-PAGES, GENERAL.

NO, NO, NO!

SIR, WE CAN'T LET THIS CHANCE SLIP BY!



HEY, I CAME TO UNTIE YOU.


COME ON, LET'S ESCAPE TOGETHER!

SIR!

AHHH...

THE TIED-UP SOLDIER HAS ESCAPED, SIR!

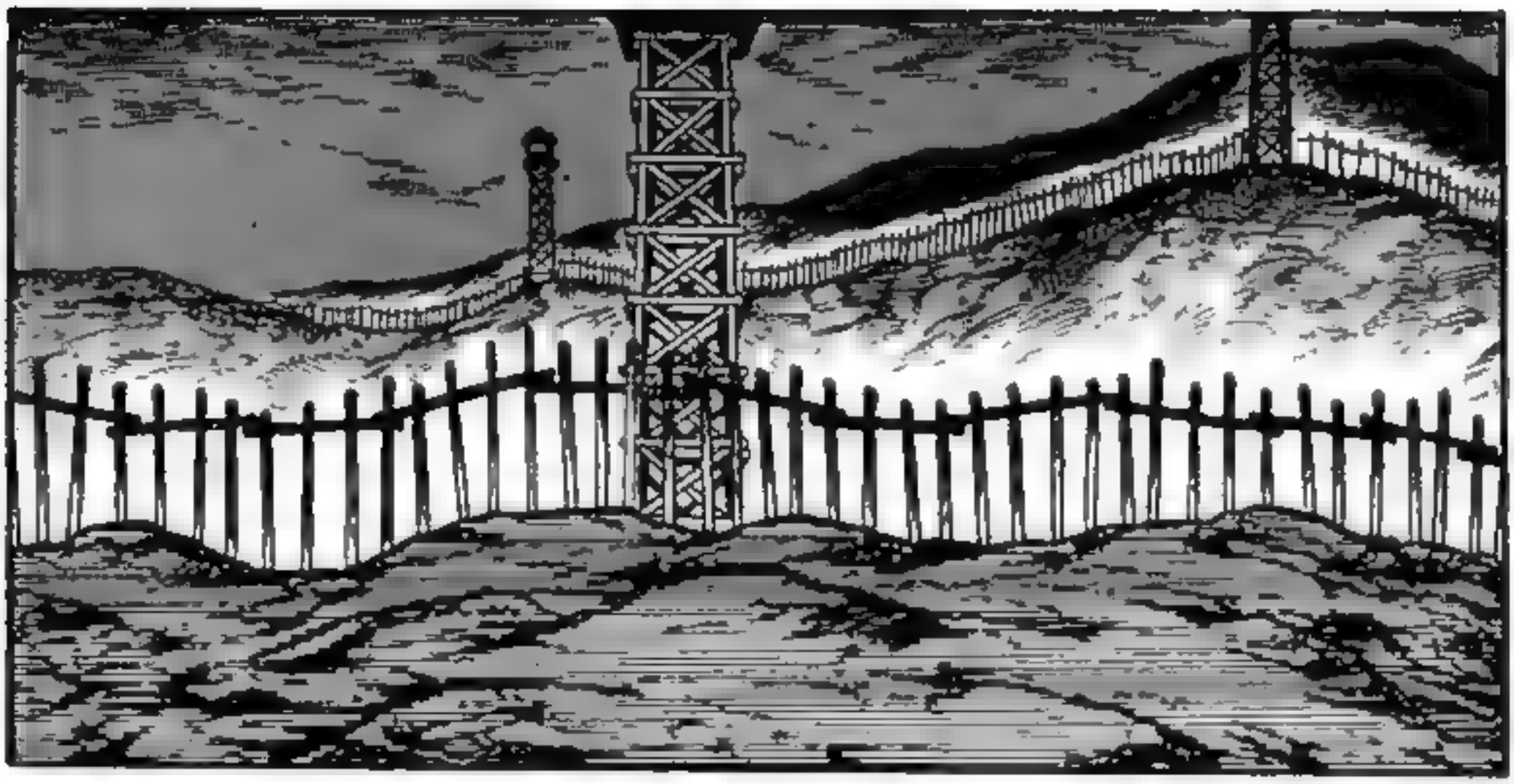
GOOD, LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME TO ATTACK THEN.

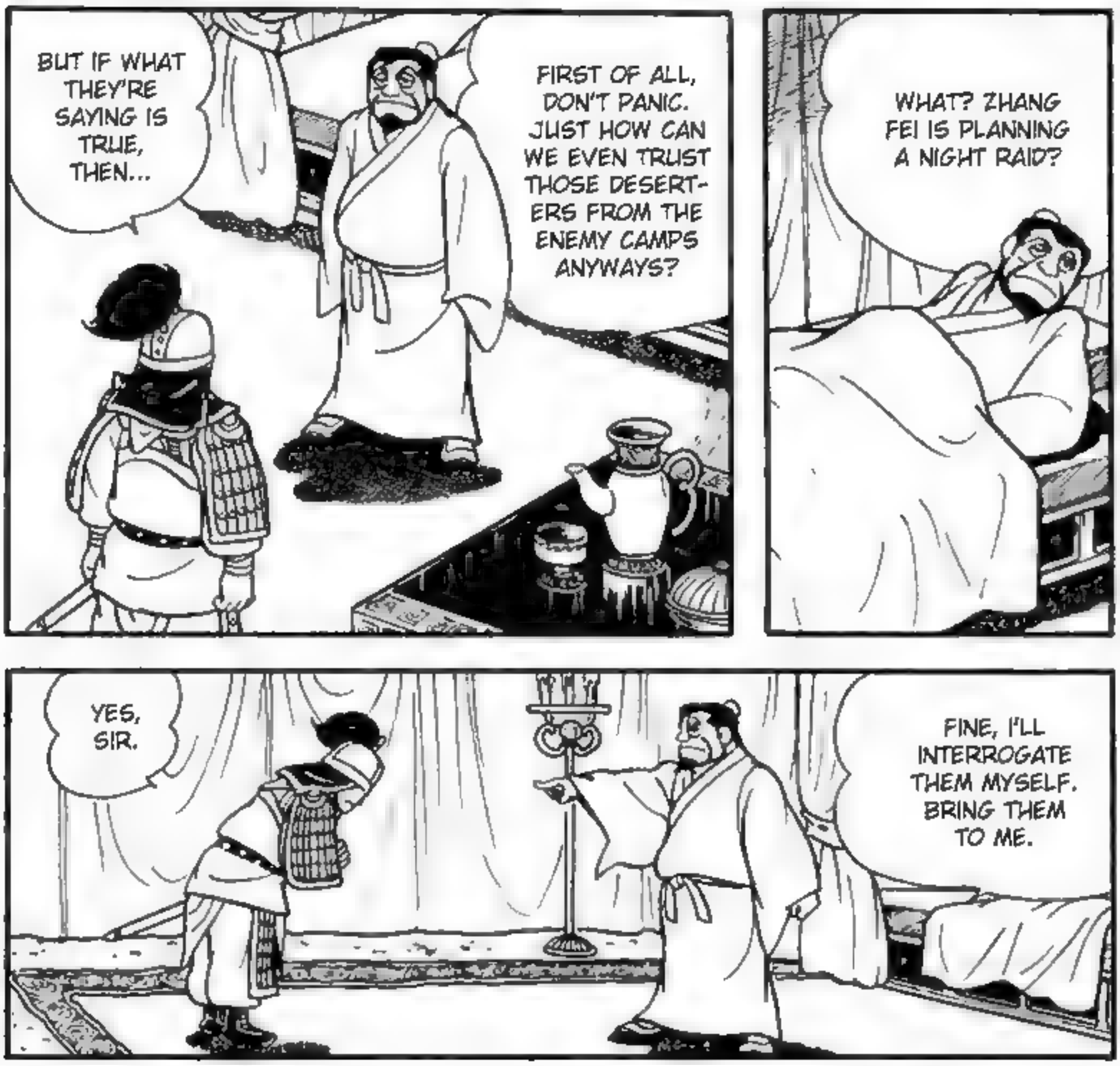
HAHA, IS THAT SO?

PREPARE TO ATTACK!

WE SHALL SPLIT OUR FORCES INTO 3 GROUPS! THE FIRST GROUP WILL HIDE AT THE SIDE ROADS, THE SECOND GROUP WILL GO AROUND THE HILLS AND HEAD BEHIND THE ENEMY CAMPS, AND THE THIRD GROUP WILL COME WITH ME TO ATTACK THE ENEMY FROM THE FRONT!

NOW, CHARGE!




BUT IF WHAT THEY'RE SAYING IS TRUE, THEN...
FIRST OF ALL, DON'T PANIC. JUST HOW CAN WE EVEN TRUST THOSE DESERTERS FROM THE ENEMY CAMPS ANYWAYS?
WHAT? ZHANG FEI IS PLANNING A NIGHT RAID?
YES, SIR.
FINE, I'LL INTERROGATE THEM MYSELF. BRING THEM TO ME.

THIS WAY.

HE BEAT ME SENSELESSLY WITH A STICK JUST BECAUSE I SPILLED A LITTLE ALCOHOL ON HIM! I CAME TO SIR BECAUSE I WANTED REVENGE...!

O-OF COURSE NOT, SIR!
SO YOU TWO ARE THE DESERTERS? YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE ON ZHANG FEI'S ORDERS TO TRICK US NOW, WELL?

TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES!

HMM ...

ALRIGHT, WAKE UP THE SOLDIERS AND PREPARE FOR AN ENEMY RAID.

YES, SIR!

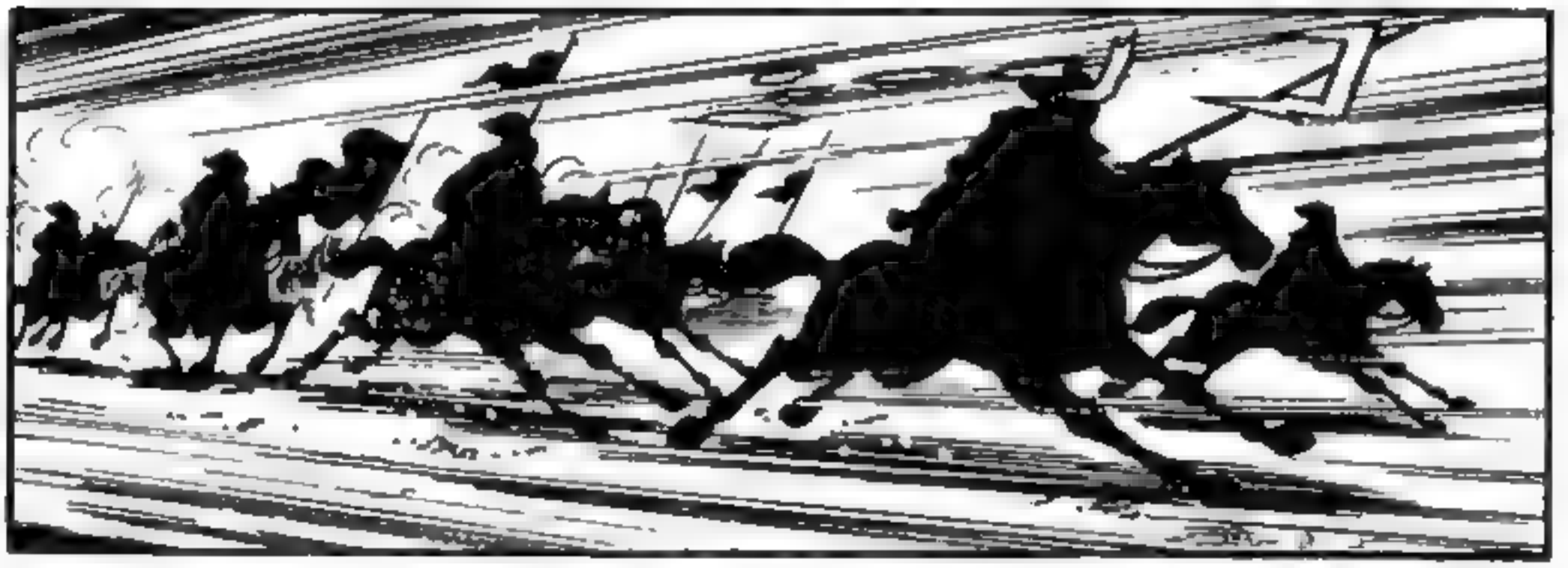
THOSE ARE QUITE THE SEVERE WOUNDS... IT REALLY DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU'RE LYING.

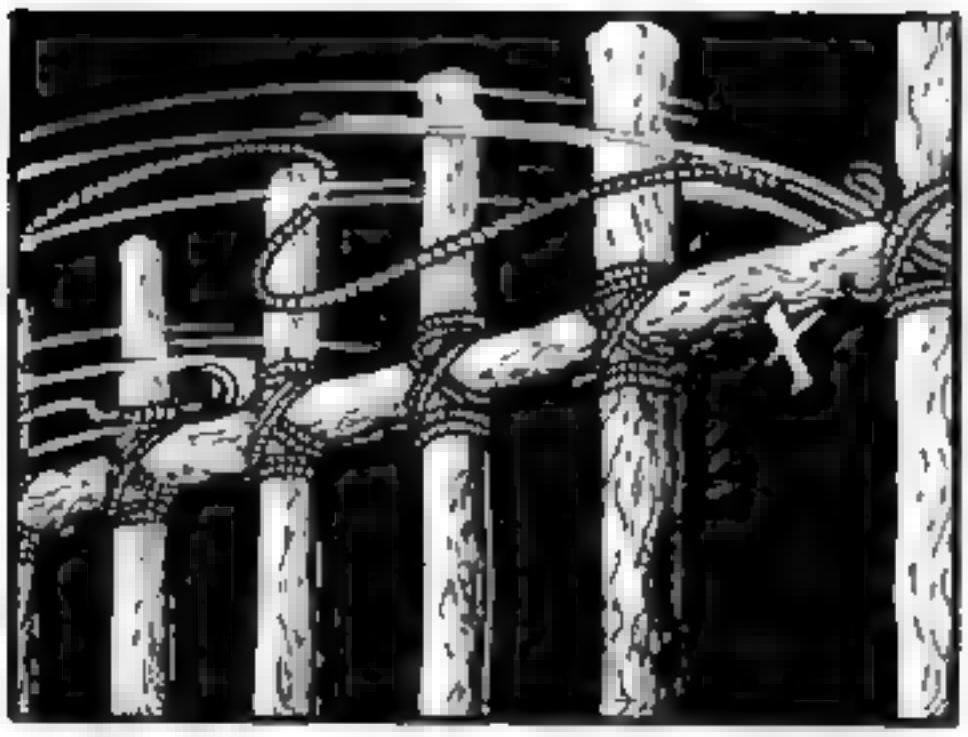
QUICKLY, THE ENEMIES MIGHT COME ANY MOMENT NOW!

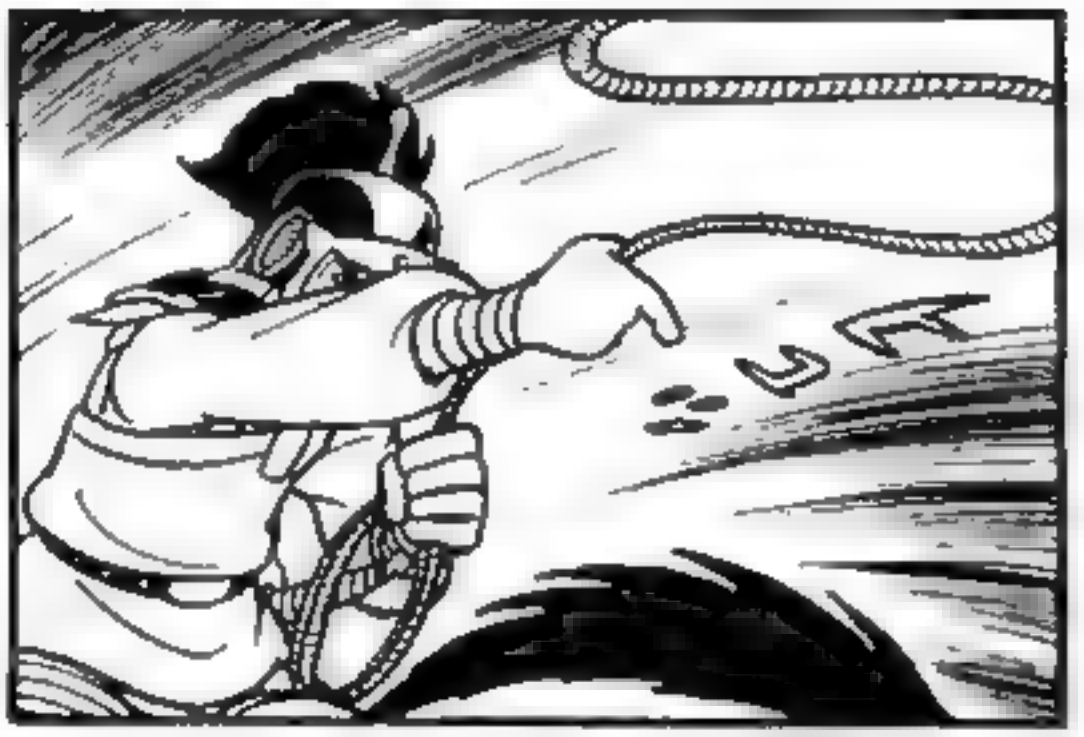
AH!

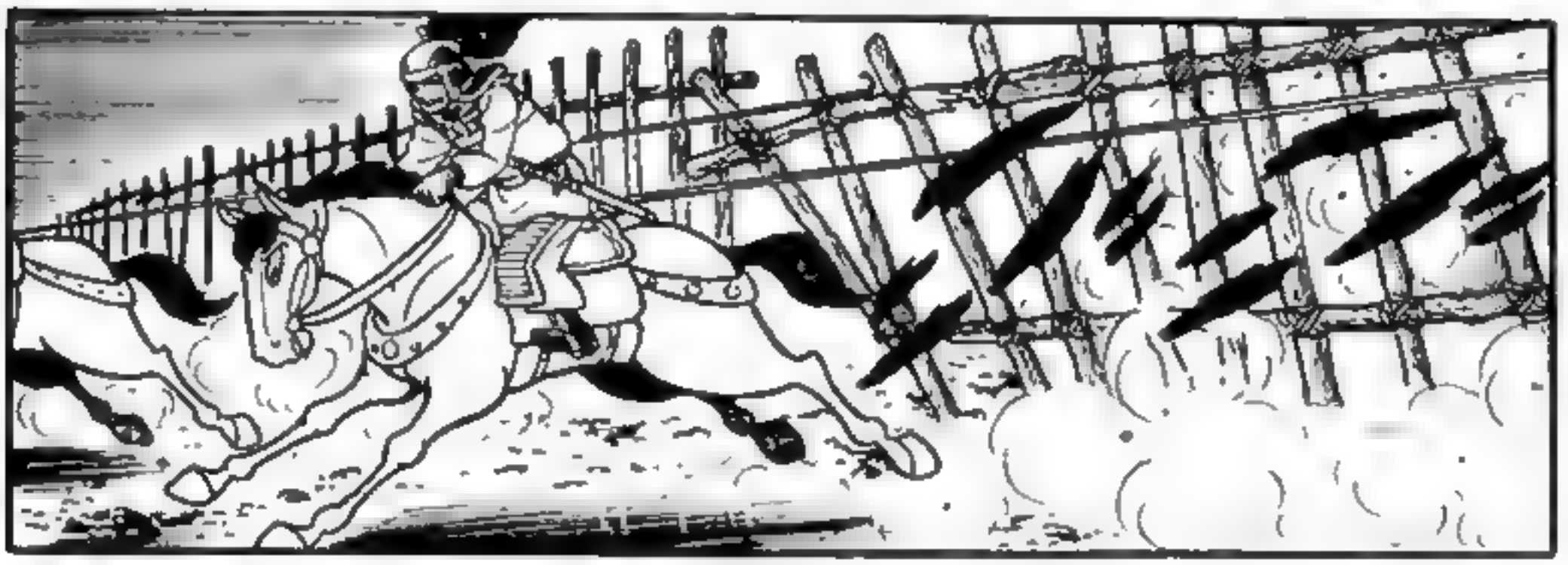
THEY'RE HERE ALREADY!?

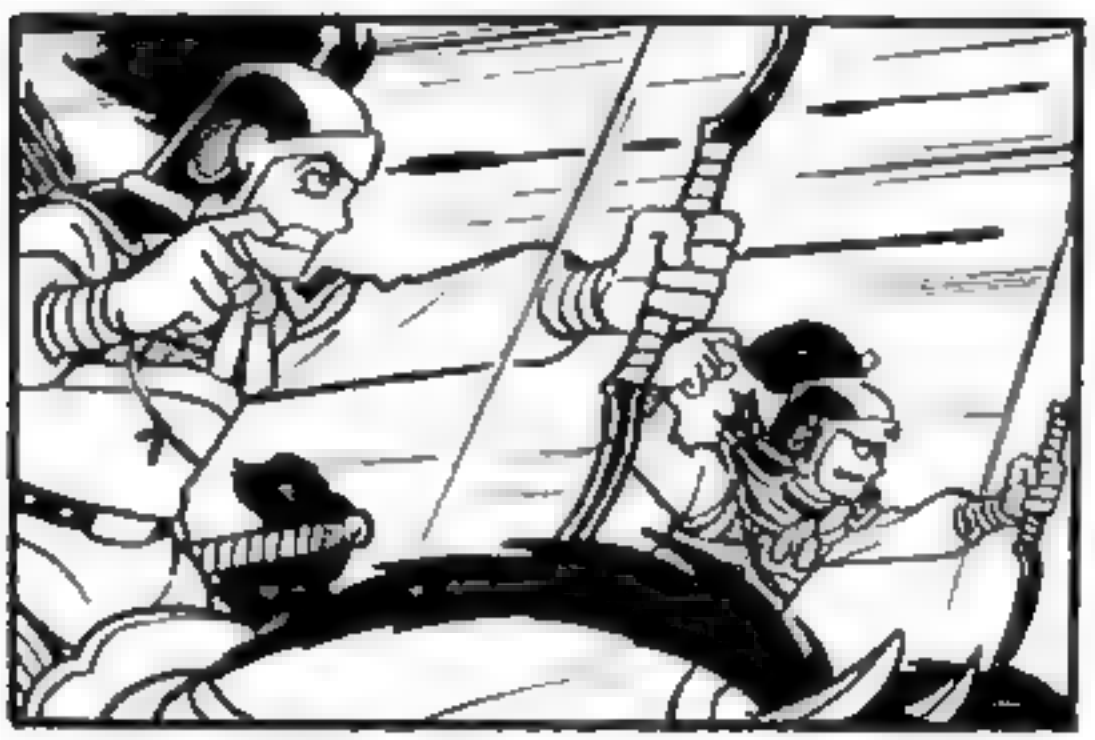
IT'S A RAID!

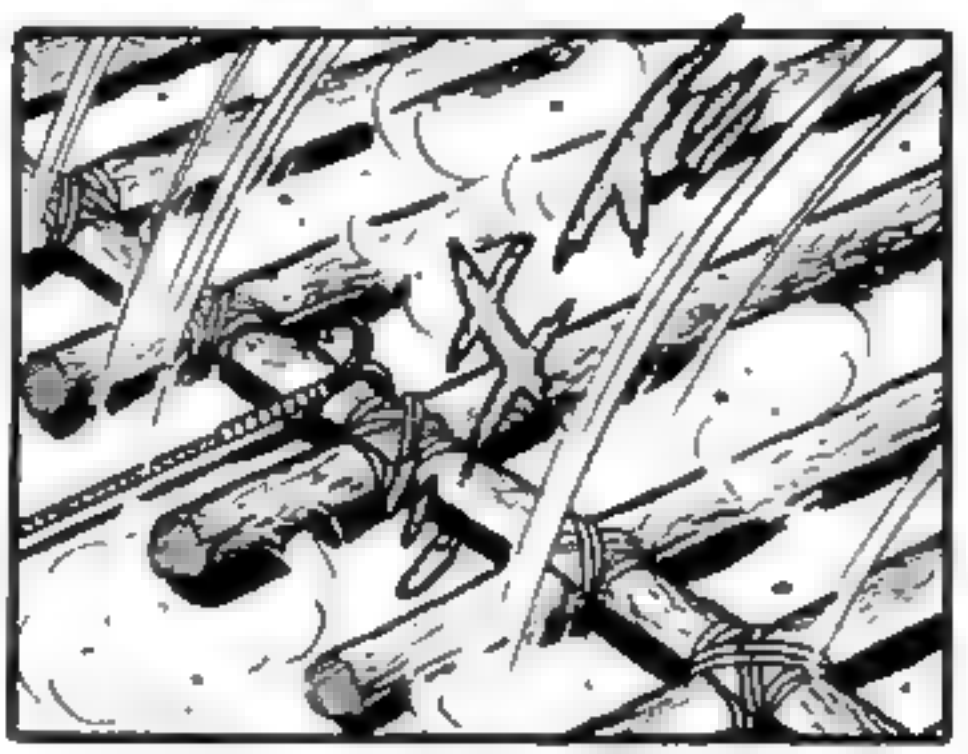


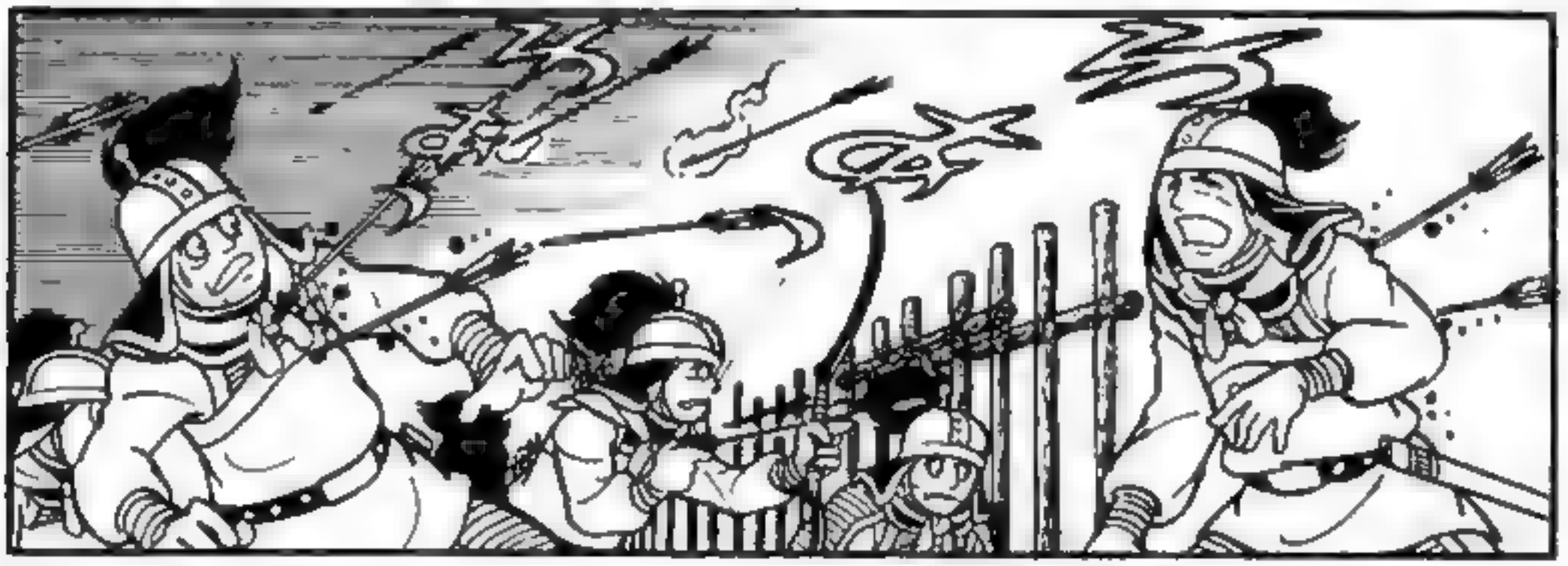






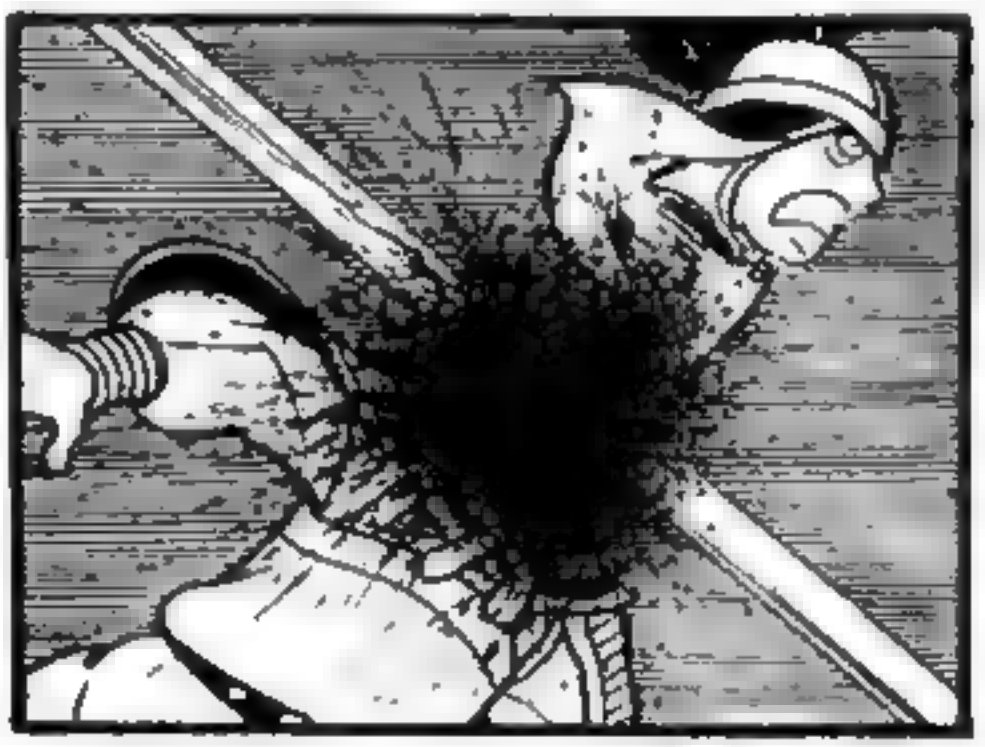




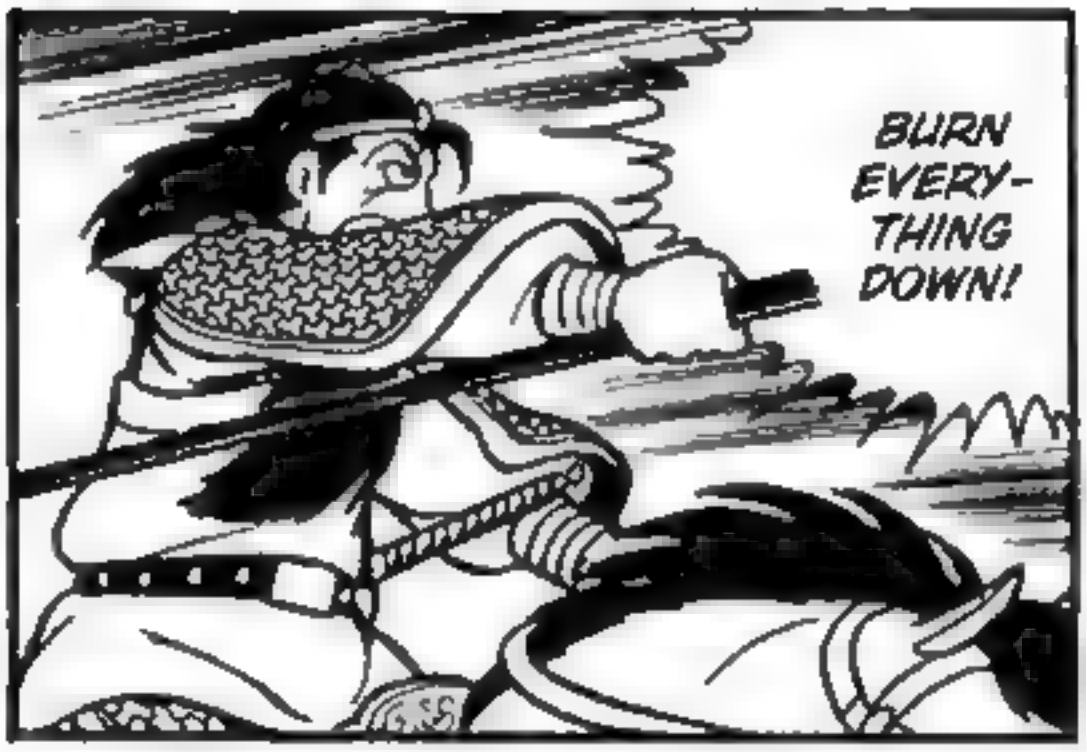


DO NOT BACK AWAY! DON'T LET THEM IN ANY FARTHER!

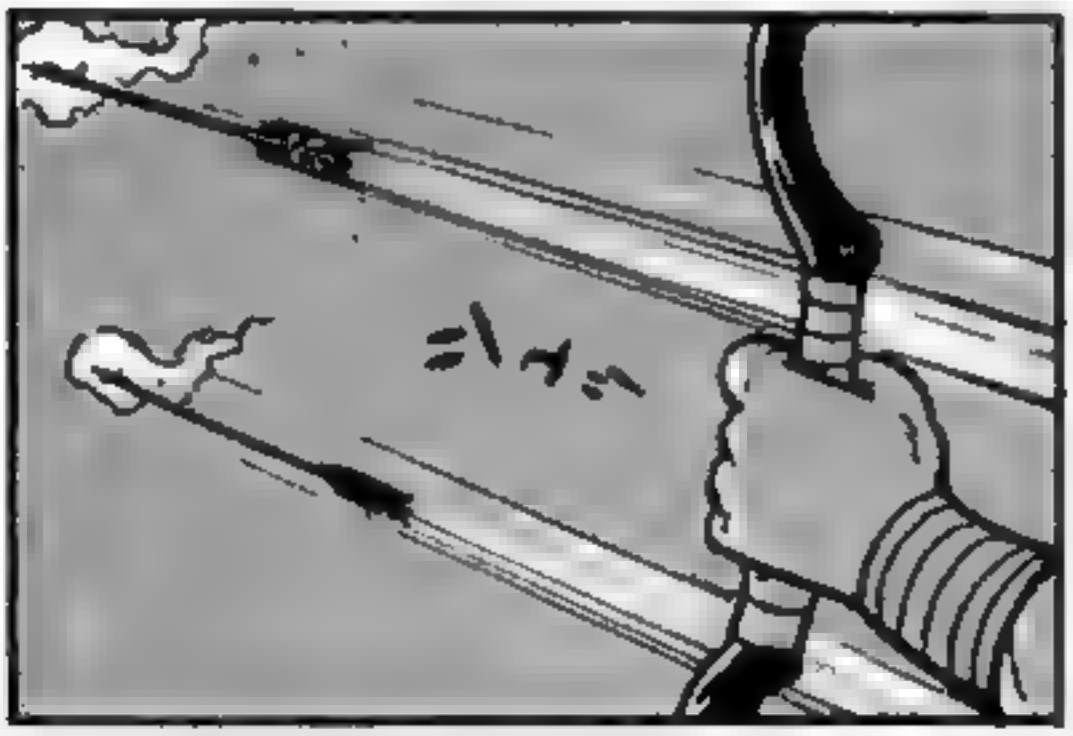
AGHH!

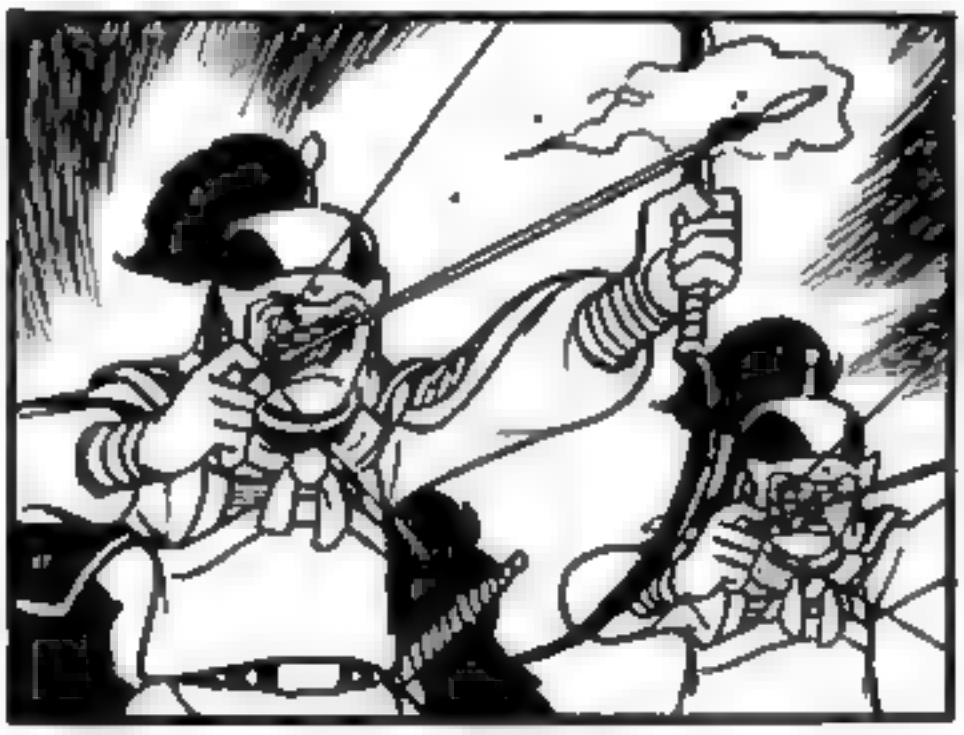


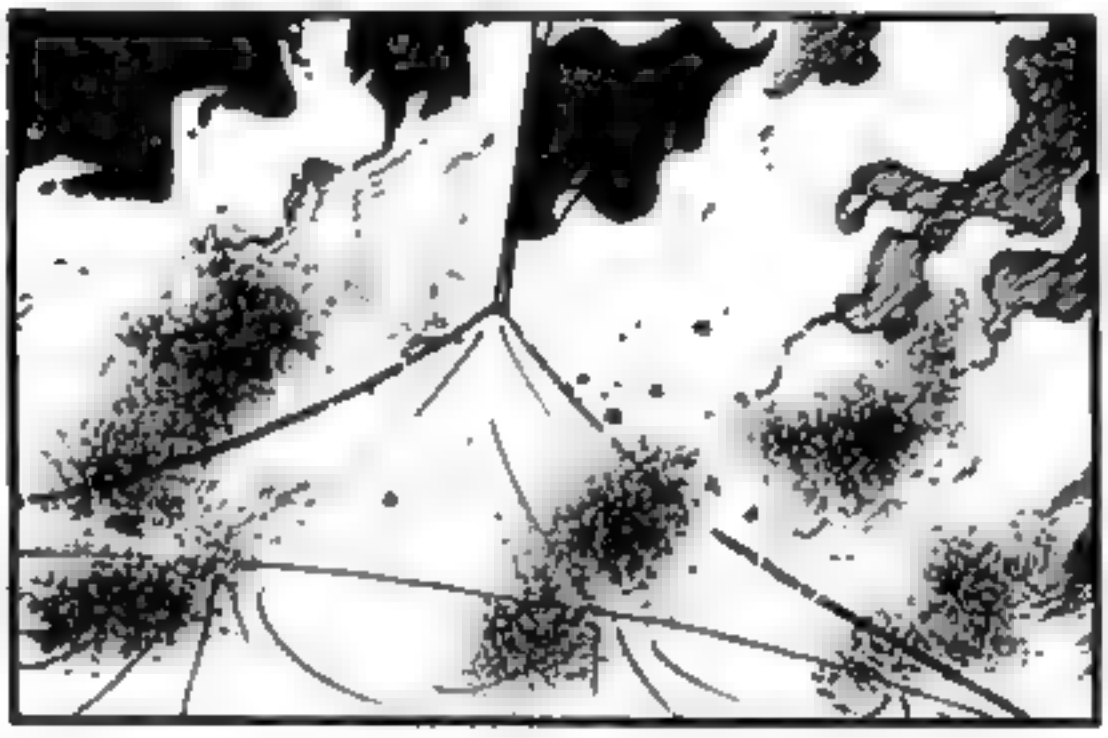
THE ENEMIES CAN'T NUMBER MORE THAN A COUPLE THOUSAND! AS LONG AS OUR ENTIRE FORCES ATTACK, EVEN ZHANG FEI WILL BE NOTHING TO FEAR!


BURN EVERY-THING DOWN!

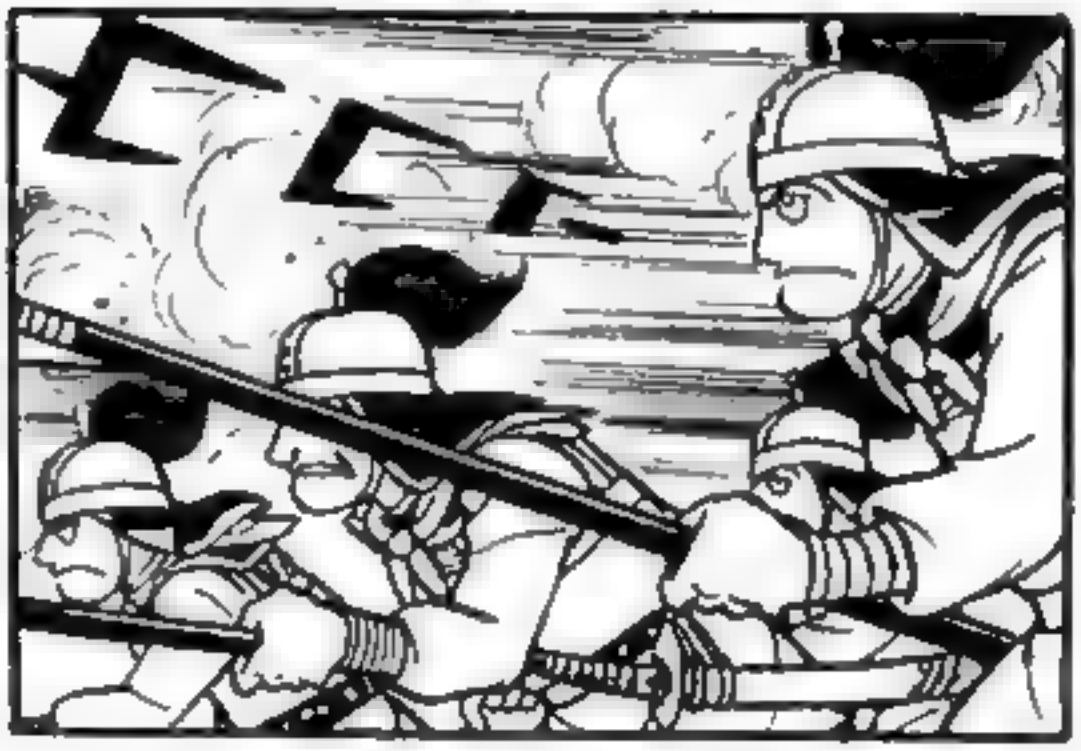
SET THEIR CAMPS ON FIRE!







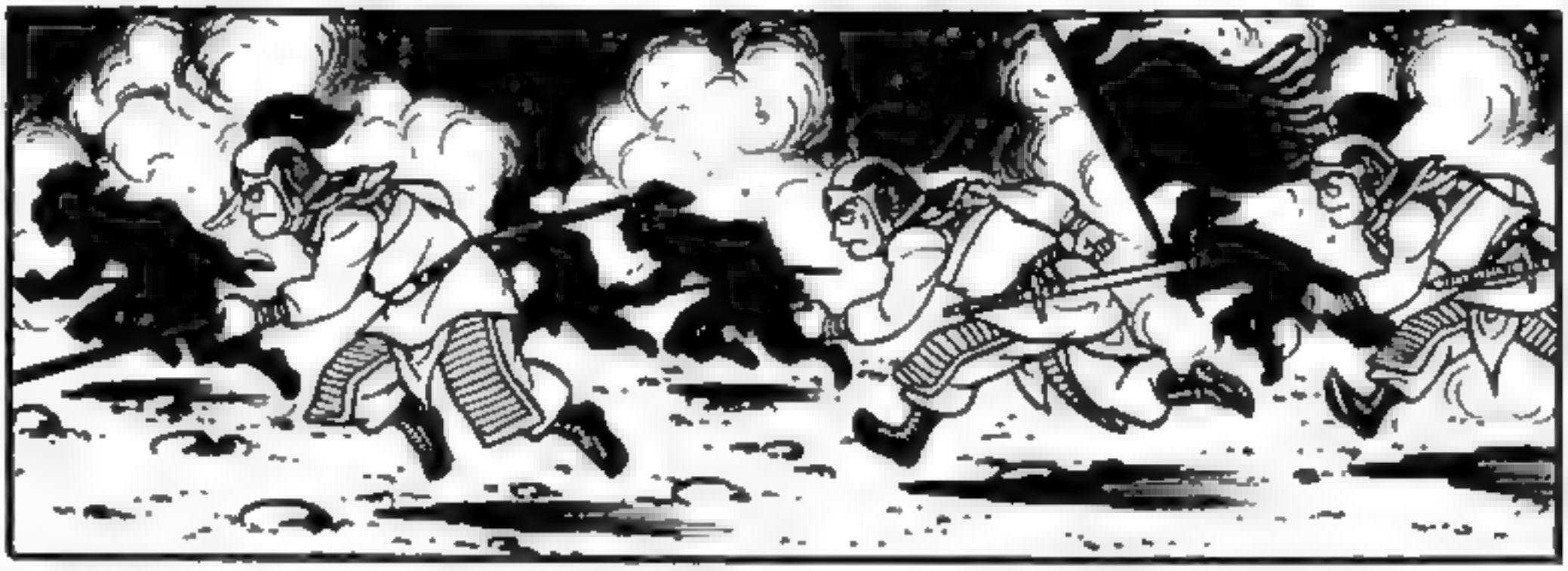
WHAT ARE YOU DAMN COWARDS DOING!? DON'T LET OUR SUPE-RIOR NUMBERS BE OVERWHELMED!



OUR GENERAL IS RIGHT! THE ENEMIES ARE ONLY A COUPLE THOU-SAND! WE CAN DEFEAT THEM!

STOP BEING SUCH A COWARD AND FOCUS ON FINDING LIU DAI!
SIR, IF WE GO IN ANY DEEPER THAN THIS, WE'LL BE IN SERIOUS DANGER. THE ENEMIES ARE START-ING TO COME BACK FIERCER THAN EVER!

BUT SIR, OUR SOLDIERS ARE ALREADY STARTING TO RUN AWAY!



FIGHT BACK, YOU YELLOW-BELLIED COWARDS!

HAHAHA! JUST LOOK AT OUR ENEMIES RUNNING AWAY!

FINISH THEM ALL OFF!

RETREAT!

UNRELIABLE BASTARDS, CAN'T EVEN GIVE A PROPER FIGHT...!

IF I WERE TO LET THIS CHANCE ESCAPE, I'LL BECOME THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THIS WORLD!

AFTER THEM! DON'T LET A SINGLE ENEMY ESCAPE!

KILL THE ENEMY GENERAL ZHANG FEI!

ALRIGHT, THIS SHOULD'VE LURED THEM OUT FAR ENOUGH.

張
THAT'S THE SIGNAL!

張

THE FLEEING ENEMIES HAVE SUDDENLY TURNED AROUND TO FACE US!
HMM?

YOU DIDN'T THINK ZHANG FEI WOULD REALLY TURN TAIL FROM YOU AND YOUR PATHETIC ARMY NOW, DID YOU!?

LISTEN WELL, LIU DAI! WE ONLY PRETENDED TO RUN AWAY TO LURE YOU OUT FROM YOUR BASE!

ALL FORCES CHARGE! MAKE SURE NOT TO KILL LIU DAI!

RETREAT, RETREAT!

GAHH!

YOU FOOL! YOU CAN ONLY SAY THAT BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW FERO-CIOUS ZHANG FEI REALLY CAN BE!

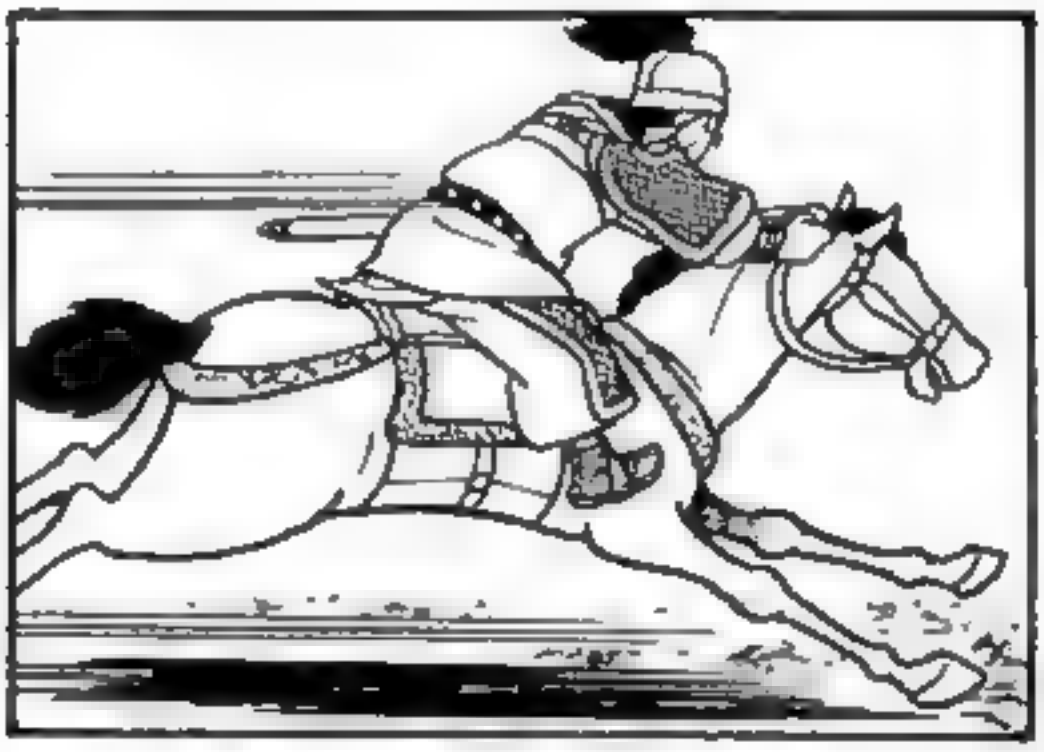
SIR, THE ENEMIES STILL DON'T NUMBER VERY MUCH. I'M SURE THAT WE CAN WIN IF WE FIGHT BACK!

RETREAT! WE'LL DEFEND OUR POSITION FROM INSIDE OUR BASE UNTIL THE CHAN-CELLOR SENDS US REINFORCEMENTS!

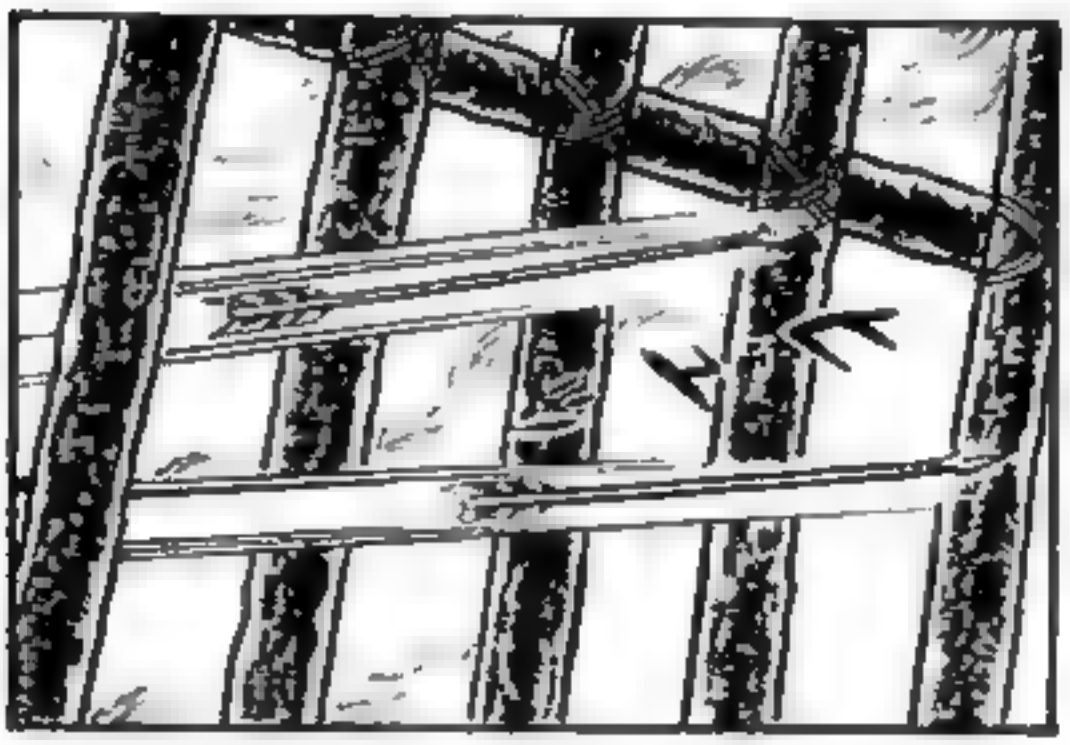
WHAT!?

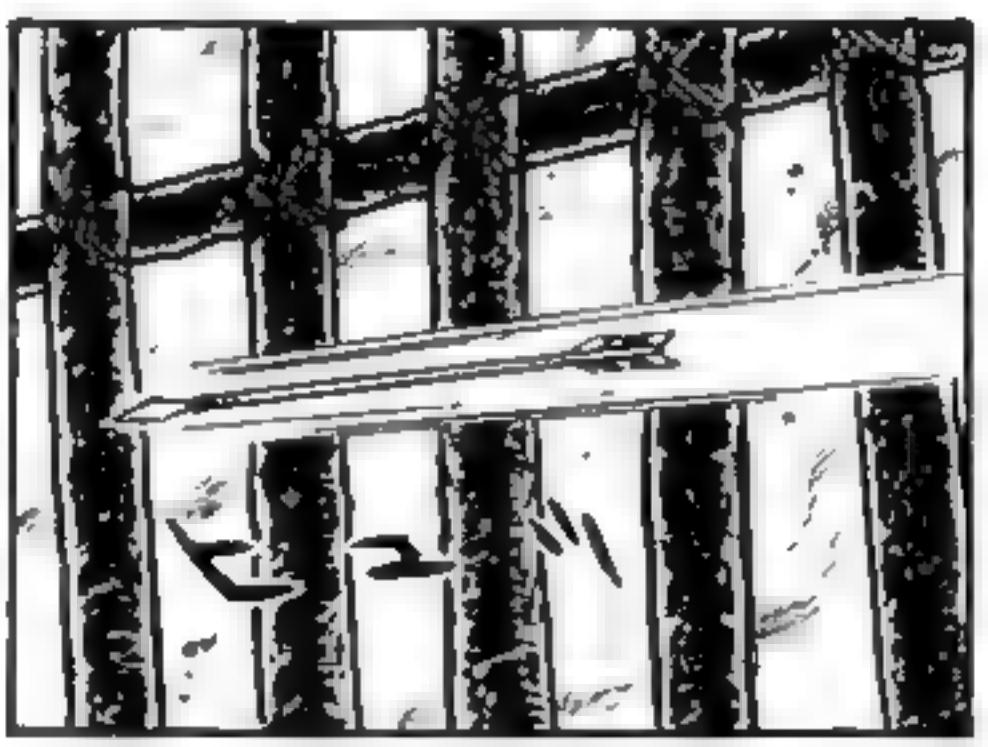
HMM?

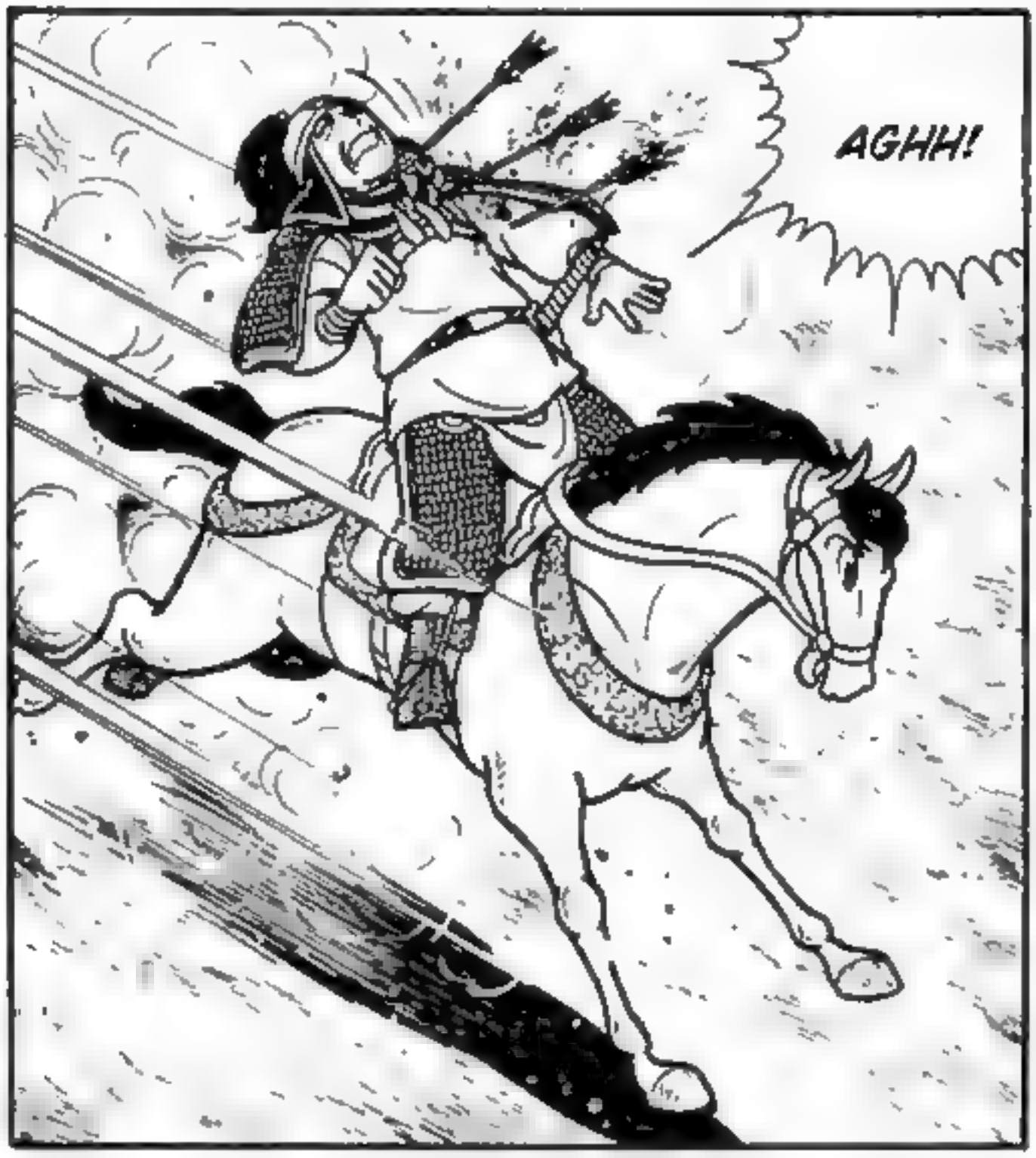
YES...
GENERAL, SOMETHING ABOUT OUR BASE IS A LITTLE STRANGE.

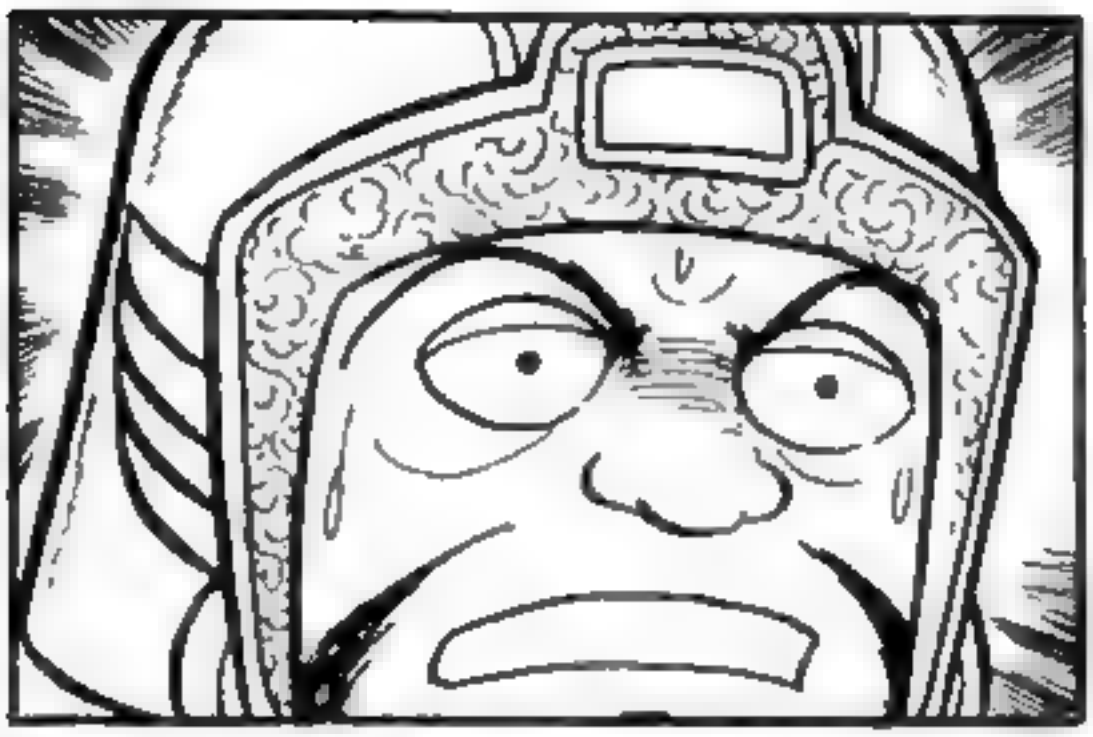


ALLOW ME TO GO AHEAD AND SEE WHAT'S GOING ON, SIR.









*FLAG (張) READS ZHANG FOR ZHANG FEI

IT'S ZHANG FEI'S FLAG!

UGH!

RETREAT!

HAHAHA, DID YOU FINALLY REALIZE, LIU DAI? I HAD MY ARMY SECRETLY STATIONED BEHIND YOUR BASE SO THAT THEY COULD TAKE IT OVER ONCE I LURED YOUR FORCES OUT.

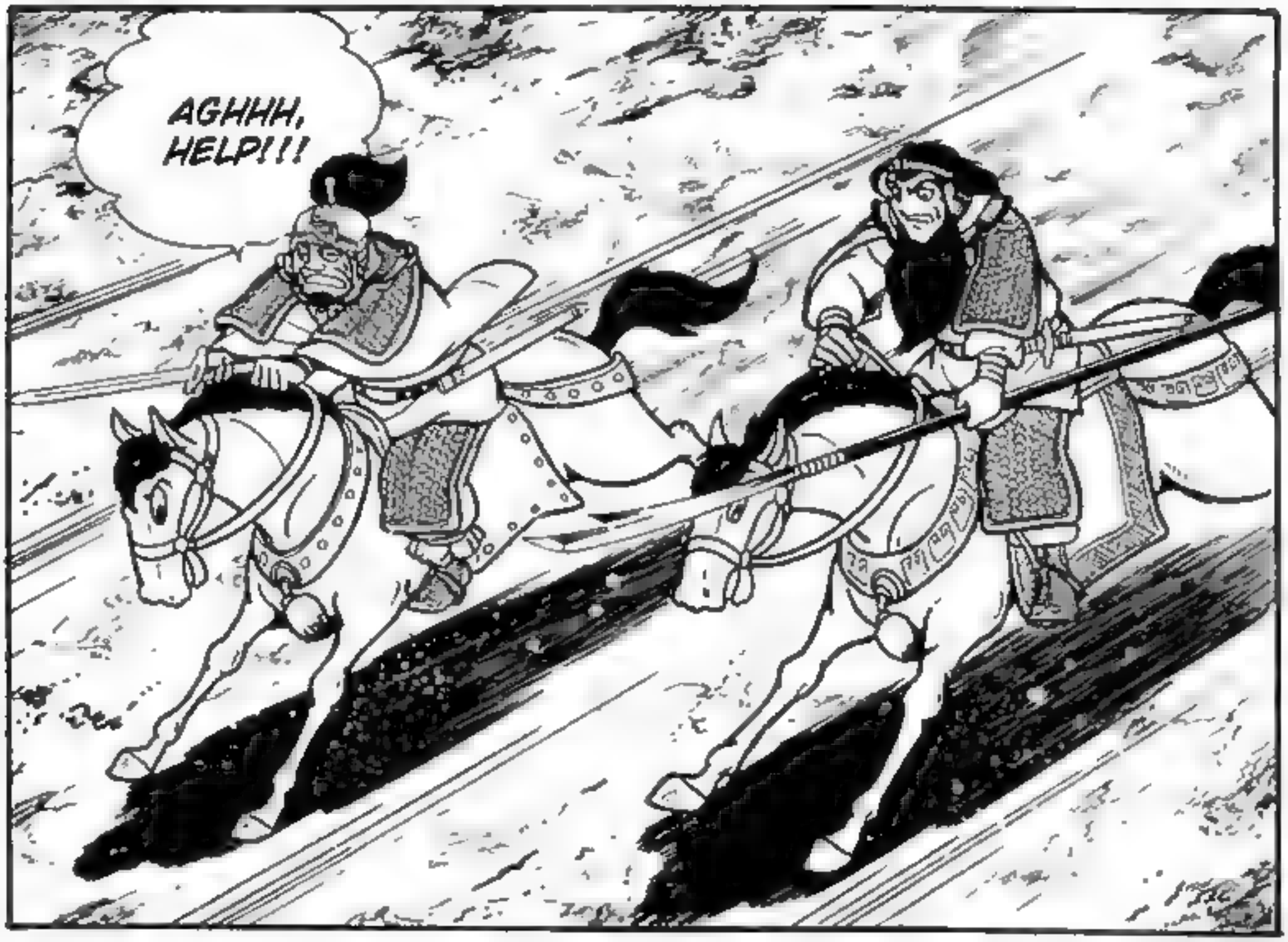
YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO RUN TO, LIU DAI!

PROTECT OUR GENERAL!

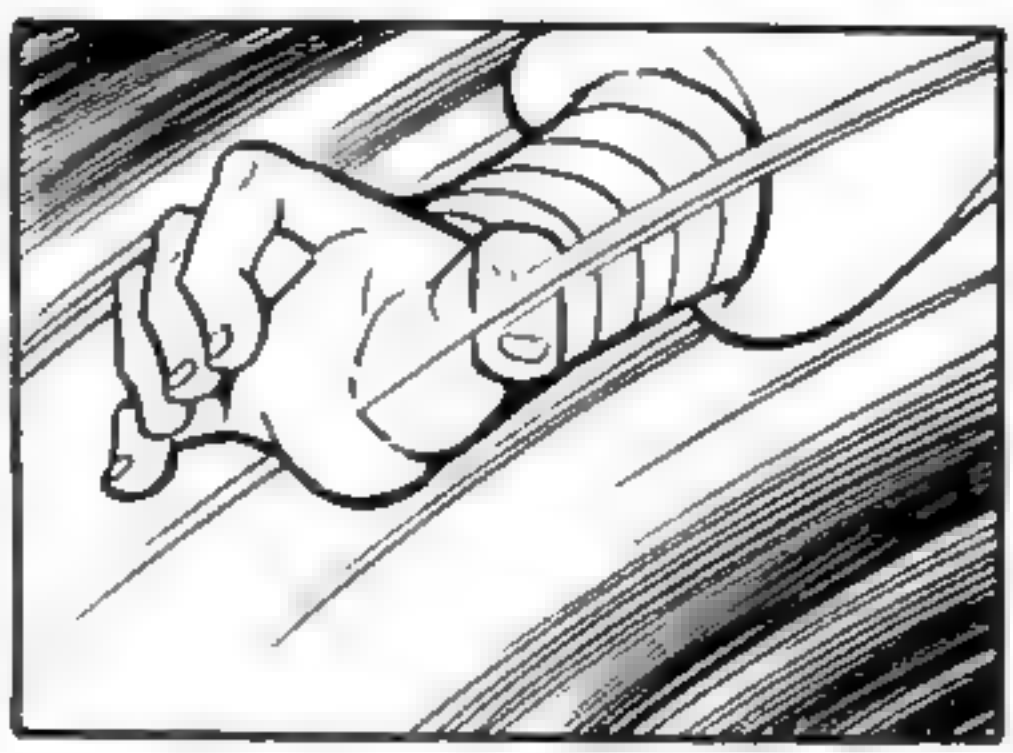
IF YOU DON'T CLEAR THE WAY, CONSIDER YOUR LIVES FORFEIT!

MOVE IT! THE ONLY ONE I CARE ABOUT IS LIU DAI!

AGHH!


AGHHH, HELP!!!

AGHHH!



LIU DAI HAS BEEN CAPTURED!

IT'S NO GOOD, RUN FOR IT!

GULP!

LET US NOW RETREAT FOR REAL THIS TIME!

LET THEM ESCAPE, WE HAVE NO BUSINESS WITH THEM ANYMORE!

AH, IT'S YOU GUYS.

SIR, MAY WE HAVE THE HONOUR OF TAKING IN GENERAL LIU DAI?

HERE, TAKE HIM IN.

I HOPE THE BRUISES I GAVE YOU DOESN'T HURT TOO MUCH.

I COMMEND YOU ON YOUR FINE ACTING SKILLS.

張

DIPLOMACY

GENERAL LIU DAI! PLEASE FORGIVE ME IF MY SUBORDINATES TREATED YOU ROUGHLY.

?

UNTIE HIM AT ONCE.

I WOULD LIKE TO CLEAR UP THIS MISUNDERSTANDING IF POSSIBLE.

I OWE A GREAT DEAL TO THE CHANCELLOR AND NEVER ONCE INTENDED TO WAGE WAR AGAINST HIM. BUT WHEN CHE ZHOU TRIED TO KILL ME, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL HIM IN SELF-DEFENSE, WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE ENRAGED THE CHANCELLOR.

SO YOU REALLY WEREN'T TRYING TO REBEL AGAINST THE CHANCELLOR?

I WONDER IF YOU COULD TELL THE CHANCELLOR OF MY TRUE FEELINGS?

PLEASE, COME THIS WAY.

OF COURSE, WHY ELSE WOULD I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO AVOID A DIRECT CONFRONTATION THESE PAST FEW MONTHS?

LIU DAI!

AH, WANG ZHONG!

YOU TWO ARE MY HONOURED GUESTS. PLEASE, MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME AND DRINK AND EAT AS MUCH AS YOU WANT.

WE CAN GO BACK?

YOU MAY RETURN HOME ANYTIME YOU WISH AS WELL.

SERVANTS, LET'S MAKE SURE TO TREAT THESE GENERALS WELL.

AND IF WE MEET OUR ENDS ALREADY, WE WILL HAVE BROKEN THE PROMISE TO DONG CHENG AND THE OTHER LOYAL SERVANTS OF HAN

DON'T SAY THAT, YOU KNOW WELL THAT WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING AGAINST CAO CAO RIGHT NOW.

HMPH, WHY DO WE HAVE TO SUCK UP TO THESE BUMBLING IDIOTS SO MUCH ANWAYS?

OUR ELDEST BROTHER'S PRIORITY IS TO SLOWLY BUILD UP OUR STRENGTH UNTIL WE CAN MATCH CAO CAO. AND TO DO THAT, WE MUST SURVIVE NO MATTER WHAT.

AH, ZHANG FEI. SPLENDID JOB!

WELL, UMM... THANKS, BROTHER.

I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SUCH A CALCULATING GENERAL WHO COULD COME UP WITH FINE STRATEGIES. FORGIVE ME FOR DOUBTING YOU, ZHANG FEI.

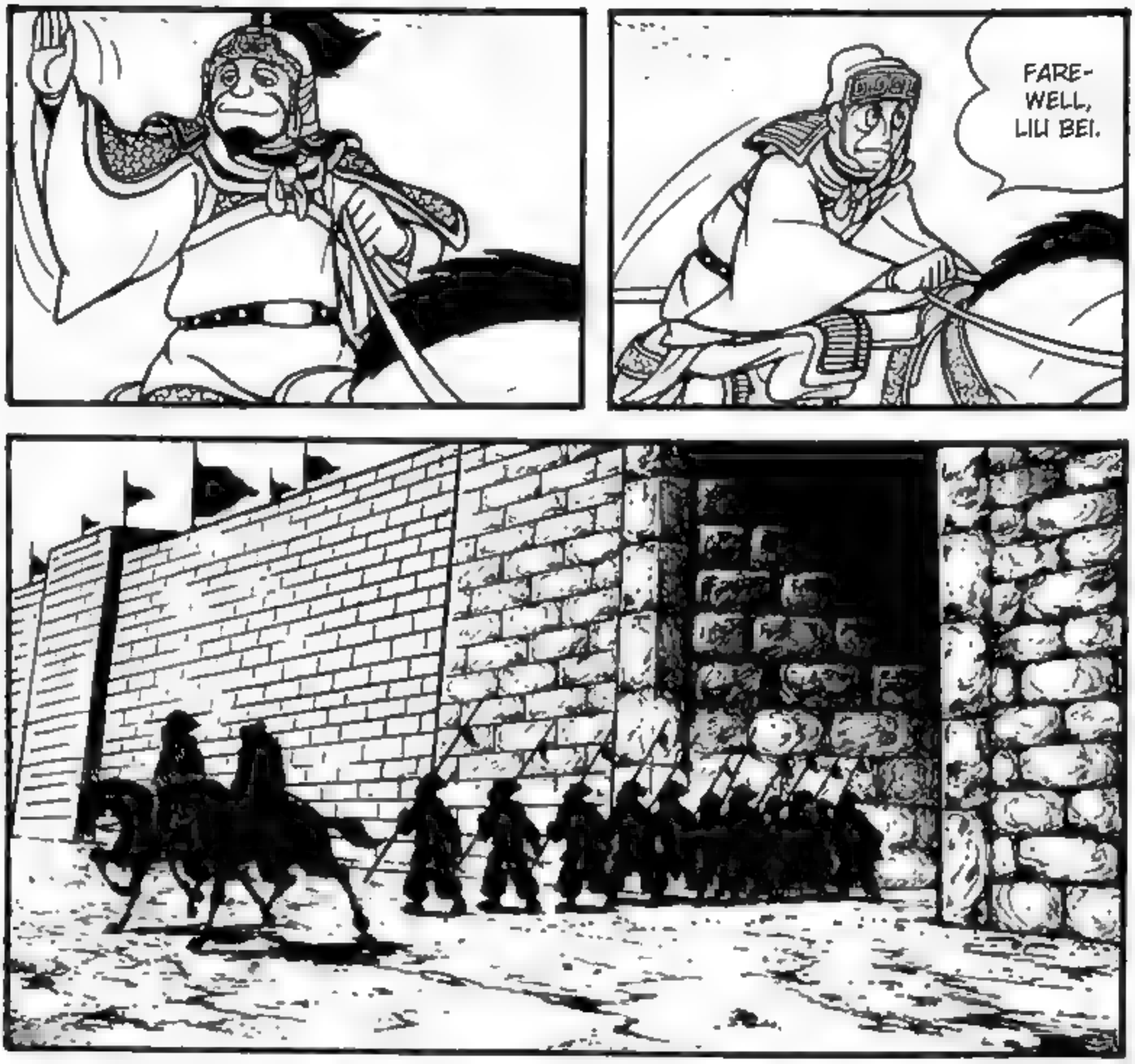
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE GOING WELL.

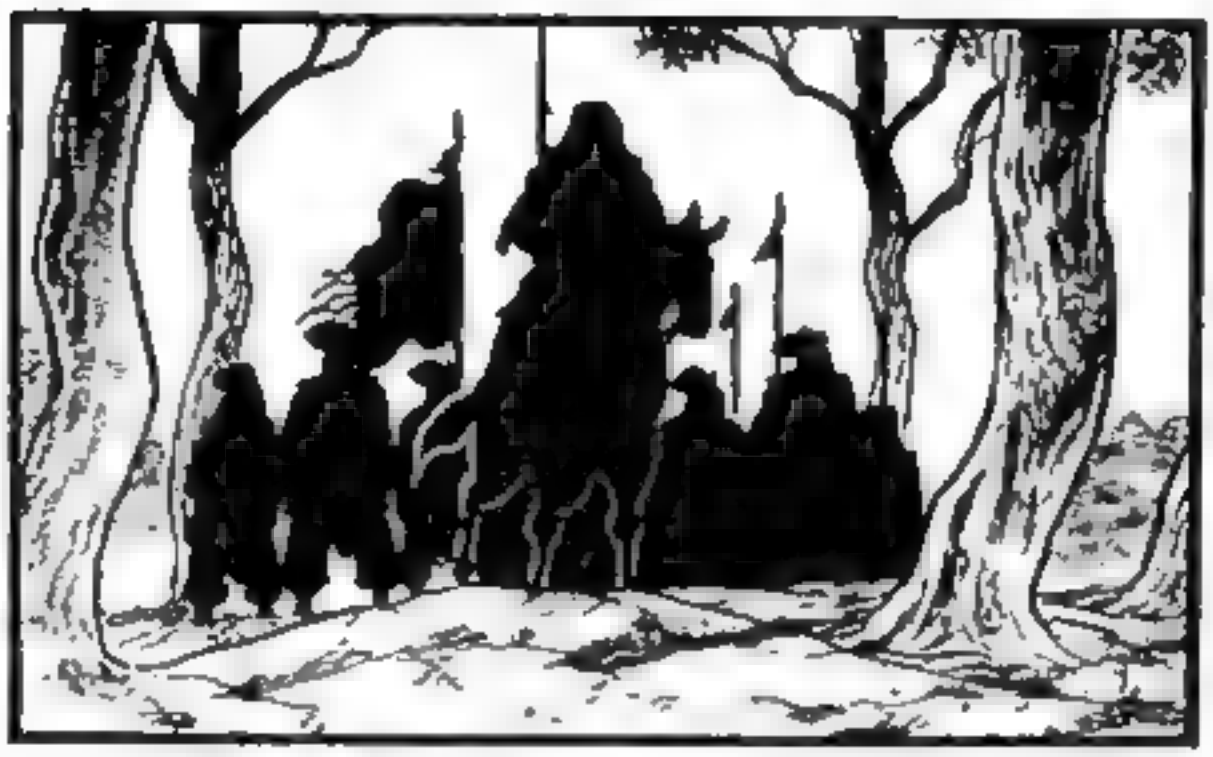
THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO NOW IS TO SEND THEM BACK BEFORE CAO CAO PERSONALLY COMES TO ATTACK XUZHOU.

WANG ZHONG AND LIU DAI ARE DRINKING HAPPILY.

NO, NO, WE'VE OVERSTAYED OUR WELCOME LONG ENOUGH.
RETURNING ALREADY? IT'D BE BETTER IF YOU STAYED HERE JUST A LITTLE LONGER.


FARE-
WELL,
LIU BEI.

YES, HE'S TRULY ONE OF A KIND. A WARRIOR THAT IS AS KIND AS HE IS BRAVE.
YOU KNOW, THAT LIU BEI'S NOT SUCH A BAD GUY ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW HIM.



HMM?

张

WHY, YES
I DO.

ZHANG FEI?
DO YOU HAVE
SOME BUSI-
NESS WITH
US?

EVEN IF MY BROTHERS WISH TO LET YOU GO, I SHALL NOT STAND FOR IT! TRY TO PASS ME BY IF YOU CAN!

AFTER ALL THAT EFFORT WE SPENT IN CATCHING YOU, HOW COULD I JUST LET YOU TWO GO FREE!?

HAVE AT YOU!

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS UP WHEN YOU DISAPPEARED FROM THE CASTLE...

GUAN YU!?

WAIT!

BUT IF WE LET THEM GO, THEY'RE ONLY GOING TO COME BACK AND ATTACK US AGAIN!

ZHANG FEI! DO YOU DARE DISOBEY OUR LORD'S ORDERS!?

WHAT'S THE POINT OF GOING THROUGH ALL THAT HASSLE!? WHY NOT JUST KILL THEM NOW WH...

THEN WE CAN CATCH THEM AGAIN WHEN THAT TIME COMES!

IF YOU WANT TO KILL THESE TWO NO MATTER WHAT, YOU'LL HAVE TO CUT ME DOWN FIRST!

SO WHAT WILL YOU DO?

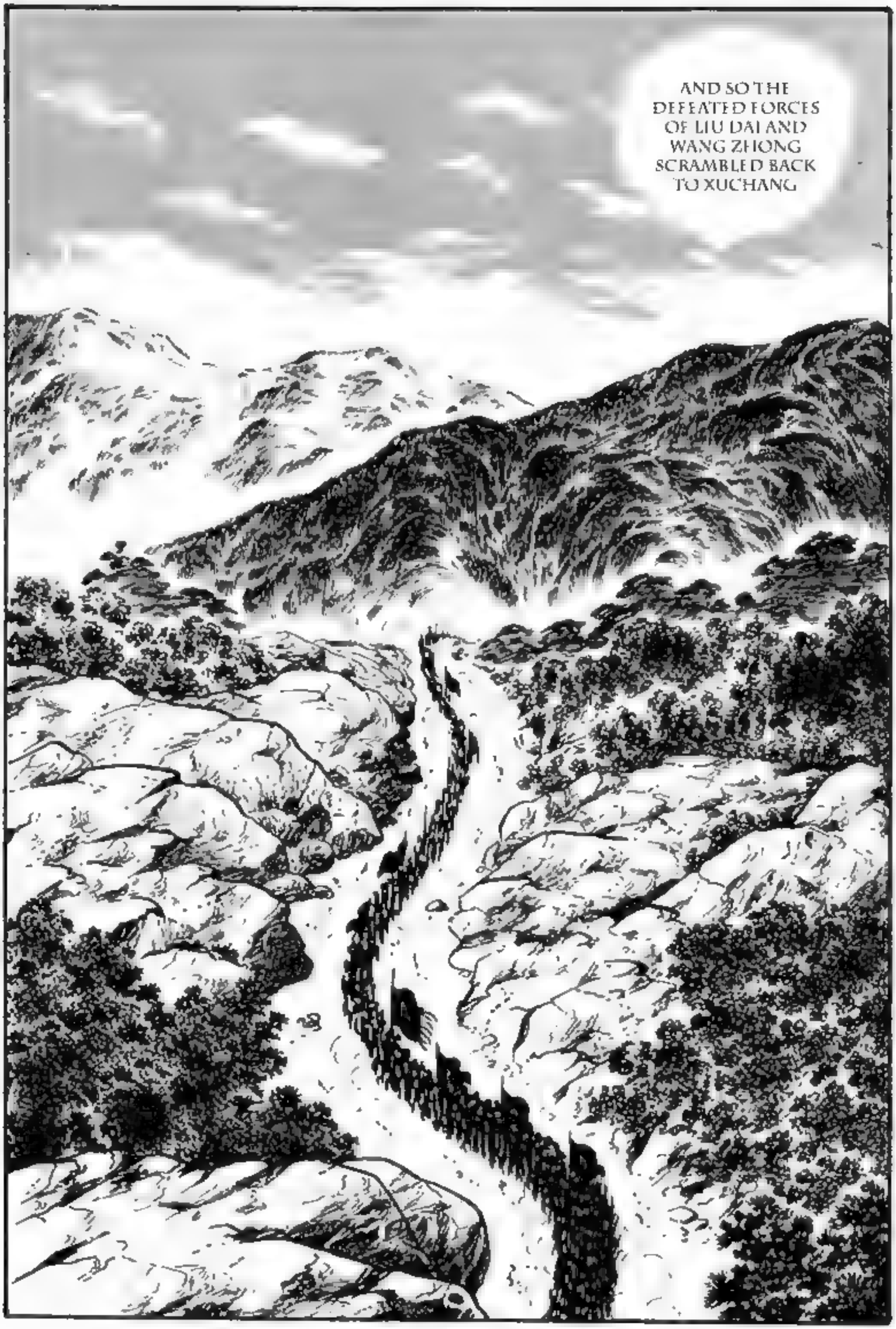
W-WHAT!?

FINE, HAVE IT YOUR WAY. MEN, RETREAT!

AS IF I EVEN HAVE A CHOICE NOW!

YES, OF COURSE. WE COULDN'T BE MORE THANK-FUL THAT YOU CAME IN THE NICK OF TIME.

I APOLOGIZE ON ZHANG FEI'S BEHALF. HE'S A HASTY AND DIFFICULT MAN, PLEASE FORGIVE HIM.


AND SO THE DEFEATED FORCES OF LIU DAI AND WANG ZHONG SCRAMBLED BACK TO XUCHANG

MOREOVER, HE IS A VIRTUOUS MAN, KIND TO BOTH HIS FRIENDS AND FOES. TO KILL A MAN LIKE HIM WOULD BE A WASTE, CHANCELLOR...
LIU BEI DOES NOT BEAR ANY OUNCE OF MALICE TOWARDS THE CHANCELLOR AND HAS NO INTENTION OF REBELLING.

IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED TO REPORT TO ME!?

SILENCE!

WHOSE SUBORDINATES DO YOU THINK YOU ARE!? MINE OR LIU BEI'S!?

JUST WHY DO YOU THINK I SENT YOU TO XUZHOU WITH MY BANNER!?

YOU'RE NOTHING BUT INCOMPETENT FOOLS THAT CAN'T EVEN FIGHT! I SHALL HAVE BOTH YOUR HEADS FOR THIS!

IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE BEGINNING THAT LIU DAI AND WANG ZHONG WERE NO MATCH FOR LIU BEI.

AND WHY DO YOU SAY THAT, KONG RONG!?

NO, MY LORD SHOULD REFRAIN FROM EXECUTING THESE MEN.

AND SO IF SIR EXECUTES THESE MEN FOR LOSING TO AN OPPONENT THAT THEY NEVER HAD A CHANCE OF WINNING AGAINST, MY LORD WILL LOSE THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE.

TRUE... I DID INDEED KNOW THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO WIN WHICH IS WHY I MERELY WANTED THEM TO HOLD THEIR POSITION. IF I EXECUTE THEM NOW, MY SUBJECTS MIGHT ASSUME THAT I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO JUDGE PEOPLE AND FOOLISHLY EXPECTED LIU DAI AND WANG ZHONG TO WIN.

YES, SIR.

FINE, I SHALL SPARE YOU YOUR LIVES BUT I HEREBY STRIP YOU OF YOUR RANKS AS GENERALS.

I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST THAT AS WELL, MY LORD.

HMM?

LOOKS LIKE THERE'S NO CHOICE NOW BUT FOR ME TO DIRECTLY GO TO XUZHOU AND CRUSH LIU BEI.

WINTER IS APPROACHING SOON AND I'M SURE MY LORD KNOWS FROM FIGHTING LU BU AT XIAPI JUST HOW TOUGH A WINTER WAR CAN BE. I ADVISE TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT SPRING AT LEAST.

MNN...

FINE. CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY, LIU BEI FOR I SHALL SPARE YOUR LIFE UNTIL SPRING.

SO I SHOULD MAKE PEACE WITH MY OTHER ENEMIES IN THE MEANTIME?

YES, LIU BIAO OF JINGZHOU AND ZHANG XIU OF XIANGCHENG MUST FIRST BE PACIFIED.

HMM, I'VE SUFFERED BITTER LOSSES TO THOSE TWO IN THE PAST BUT I WAS PLANNING TO RETURN THE FAVOUR SOONER OR LATER.

GO ON.

WITH SKILLFUL DIPLOMACY, WE CAN TURN THEM OVER TO OUR SIDE.

BY LETTING BYGONES BE BYGONES, I'M SURE THOSE TWO POWERFUL ENEMIES COULD BECOME TWO GREAT ALLIES FOR SIR.

ALL WE NEED TO DO IS ENTICE THEM WITH GREAT BENEFITS AND PROMISE THEM A GOOD FUTURE SHOULD THEY CHOOSE TO JOIN SIR.

I SEE, PULL LIU BIAO AND ZHANG XIU TO MY SIDE...

AND IF THINGS GO WELL, OTHER MINOR LORDS OF HAN WILL HEAR OF WHAT HAPPENED AND COME WILLINGLY TO BECOME YOUR SUBJECTS IN ORDER TO SECURE THEIR FUTURES.

YES, MY LORD.

ALRIGHT, I SHALL ENTRUST YOU WITH THAT TASK.

XIANG CHENG

I SHALL SEE HIM IN MY LORD'S STEAD.

WHAT? A MESSENGER FROM CAO CAO?

YES, SIR

MAY YOU BE CAO CAO'S EMISSARY?

YES, THE NAME IS LIU YE.

NOW, WHAT IS IT THAT YOU CAME HERE FOR?

I AM ZHANG XIU'S ADVISOR, JIA XU.

YES, I BELIEVE CAO CAO IS A TALENTED MAN AS WELL.

THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN IN THIS WORLD WHO IS WORTHY ENOUGH TO BE COMPARED WITH THE SUPREME ANCESTOR OF HAN. A MAN WHO POSSESSES COURAGE, VIRTUE, AND WISDOM. I BELIEVE THAT MAN TO BE CAO CAO, WHAT DOES SIR THINK?

IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT JOINING HANDS WITH MY LORD?

HEARING THAT MAKES ME QUITE HAPPY.

HMM...

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE CHANCELLOR SHALL GLADLY ACCEPT ANY OF YOUR CONDITIONS.

YUAN SHAO?

SIR, A MESSENGER FROM YUAN SHAO HAS COME.

YES, TELL HIM I SHALL SEE HIM SOON.

NO NEED TO RUSH THINGS RIGHT NOW.

JIA XU, WHAT OF YOUR REPLY TO MY OFFER JUST NOW?

I SHALL GIVE YOU AN ANSWER WITHIN DUE TIME SO PLEASE STAY THE NIGHT AT MY HOUSE FOR TODAY.

ALLOW ME TO LEAD SIR TO JIA XU'S RESIDENCES.

HE'S PROBABLY TRYING TO PULL IN SOME MORE ALLIES TO FIGHT AGAINST OUR LORD.

SIR, WHAT DO YOU THINK YUAN SHAO WANTS WITH ZHANG XIU?

YES, SIR.

ARE YOU YUAN SHAO'S MESSENGER?

WITH WINTER APPROACHING, THE WAR HAS BEEN PUT ON HOLD UNTIL SPRING.

I HAD HEARD THAT YUAN SHAO WAS FIGHTING WITH CAO CAO. HOW GOES THE WAR?

AND SO MY LORD WISHES TO JOIN HANDS WITH SIR TO CRUSH CAO CAO.

MY LORD KNOWS THAT BOTH ZHANG XIU AND LIU BIAO HAS FOUGHT AGAINST CAO CAO BEFORE AND ARE NOT ON THE BEST OF TERMS.

PLEASE PASS THIS LETTER ON TO YOUR LORD.

AGHHH!

H-HOW DARE YOU TEAR UP THE LETTER WITHOUT EVEN SHOWING IT TO ZHANG XIU! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!?

YOUR LORD COULD NOT EVEN TRUST HIS OWN BROTHER, YUAN SHU.

WHAT!?

THAT IS BECAUSE I NEED NOT EVEN BOTHER MY LORD WITH THIS.

SO WHY SHOULD WE EXPECT HIM TO TRUST US IF WE WERE TO BECOME ALLIES?

OR SHALL I DO YOU THE HONOURS MYSELF!?

NOW GET OUT, RIGHT NOW!

.....

YOU'LL REGRET THIS...!

YES, MY LORD.

WHAT!? YOU CHASED OUT YUAN SHAO'S MESSENGER!?

WHY DIDN'T YOU CONSULT WITH ME FIRST!?

BECAUSE I BELIEVE CAO CAO WILL BE THE BETTER ALLY.

WHICH IS WHY THIS IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PEACE.

JIA XU, HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW WE TRIED TO KILL CAO CAO NOT ONCE BUT TWICE!?

CAO CAO IS NOT A MAN WHO IS TIED UP WITH THE PAST. WHY ELSE WOULD HE HAVE SENT LIU YE HERE?

ONE, HE HAS THE AUTHORITY OF THE IMPERIAL COURT BACKING HIM. SECOND, HE KNOWS HOW TO CAPITALIZE ON THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THESE CHANGING TIMES. THIRD, HE HAS GREAT AMBITION AND IS A SKILLED STATESMAN.

COMPARING YUAN SHAO TO CAO CAO, IT IS CLEAR THAT CAO CAO HAS 3 MAIN ADVANTAGES.

BUT IT SHAN'T STAY THAT WAY FOR LONG.

PURELY IN TERMS OF NUMBERS BUT YES.

BUT ON THE MILITARY SIDE, DOESN'T YUAN SHAO HAVE A MORE POWERFUL ARMY?

I NEVER REALIZED THERE WAS SUCH A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YUAN SHAO AND CAO CAO.

IF SIR WISHES PEACE AND STABILITY FOR ONLY 1 OR 2 YEARS, PLEASE GO AHEAD AND SIDE WITH YUAN SHAO.

THANK YOU FOR UNDER-STANDING, MY LORD.

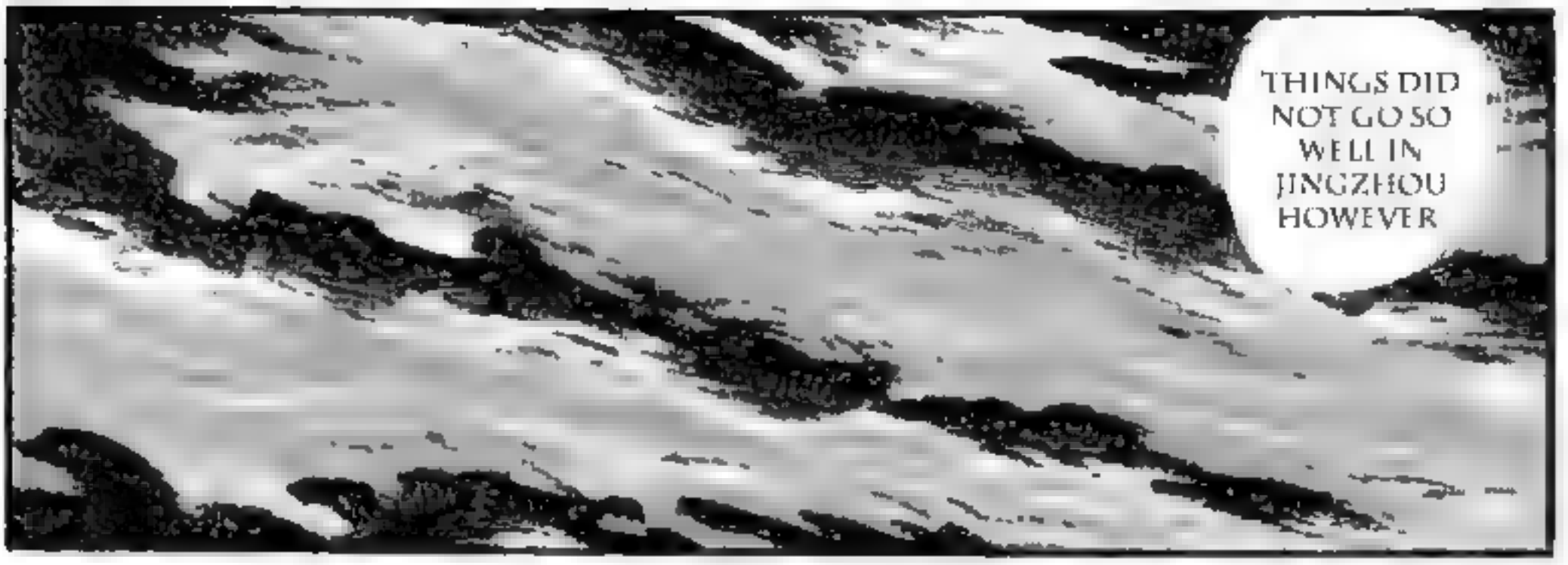
FINE, IF THAT'S WHAT MY WISEST ADVISOR THINKS, THEN I SHALL FOLLOW YOUR ADVICE.

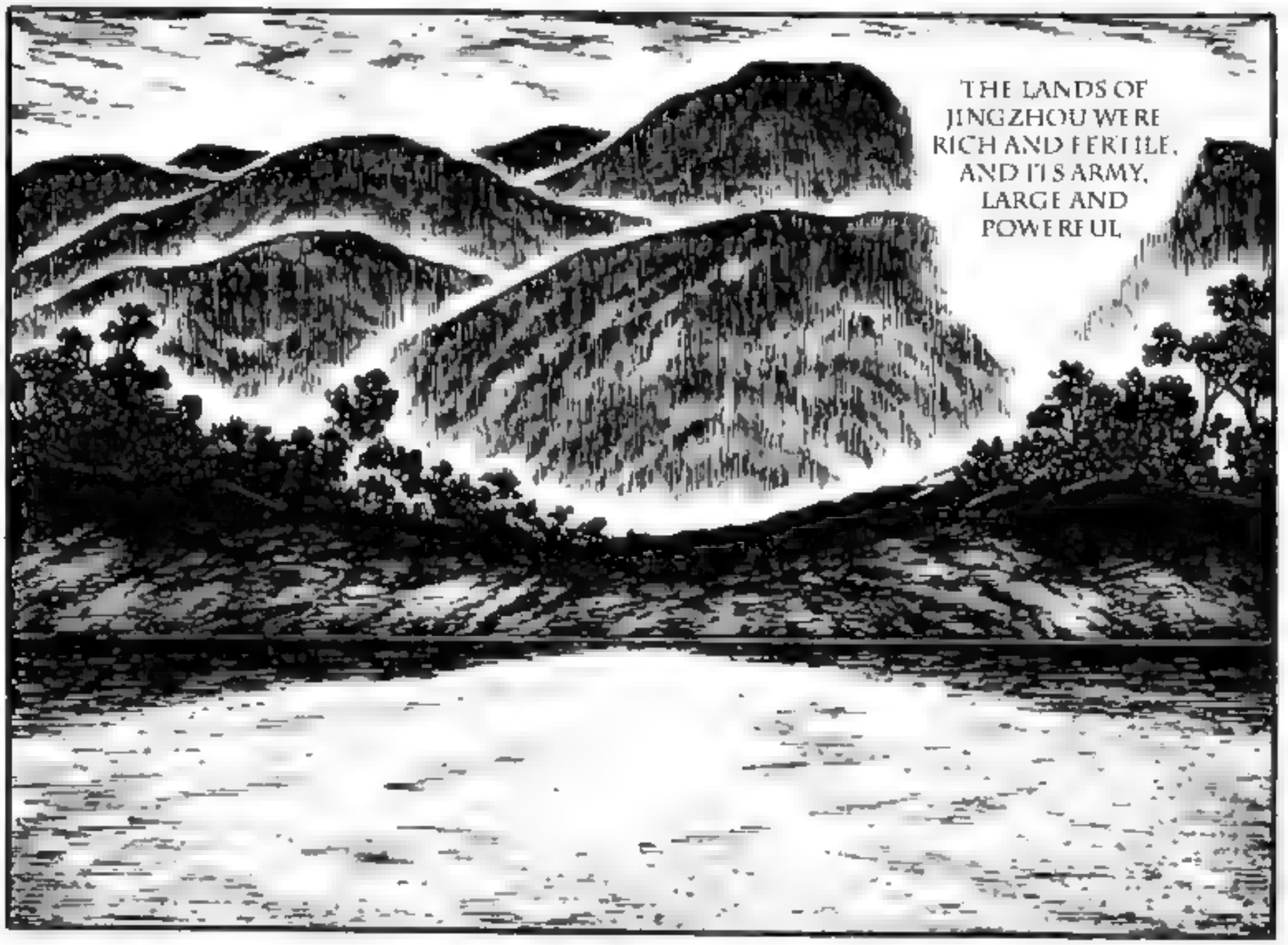
WORRY NOT, I HAVE CHASED HIM AWAY.
AH, GOOD EVENING JIA XU. SO WHAT DID YUAN SHAO'S MESSENGER WANT?

IS THAT SO?
AND I AM PLEASED TO TELL YOU THAT AFTER CONSULTING WITH MY LORD, WE HAVE AGREED TO BECOME CAO CAO'S SUBORDINATES.

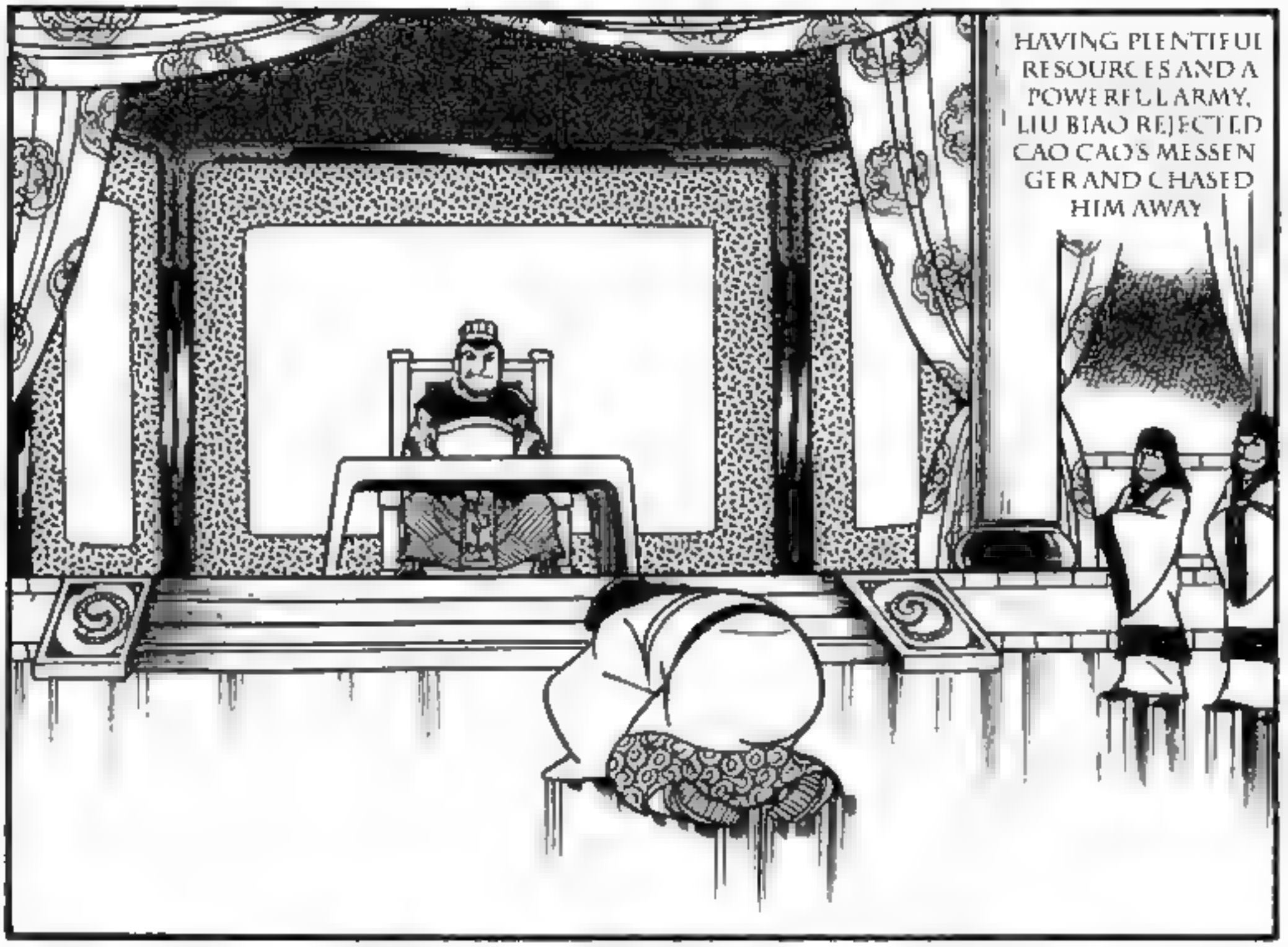
THANK YOU, I MUST NOW GO BACK TO XUCHANG TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS TO THE CHANCELLOR

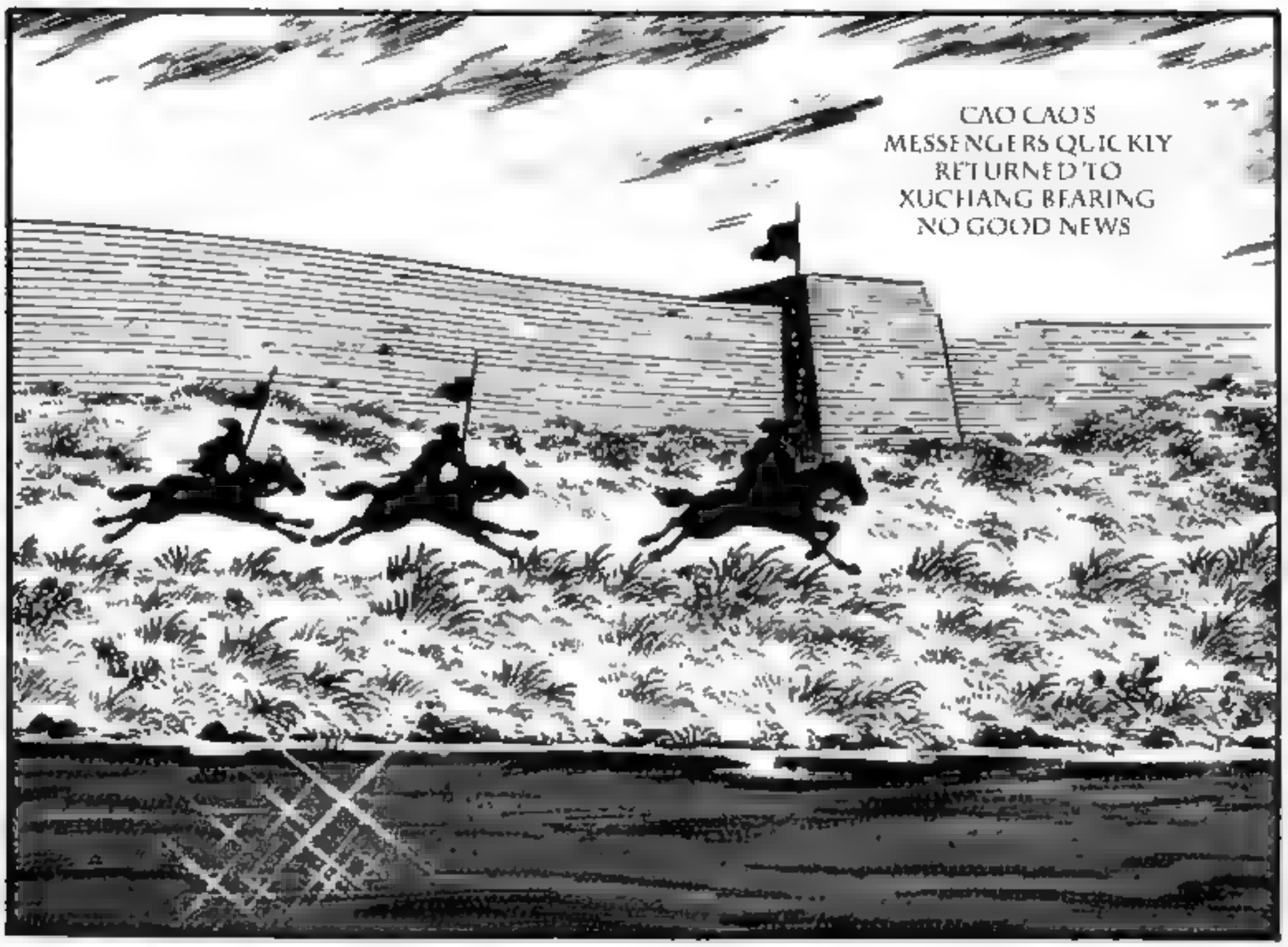
LIU YE HAPPILY RODE BACK TO XUCHANG BEARING GOOD NEWS


THINGS DID NOT GO SO WELL IN JINGZHOU HOWEVER

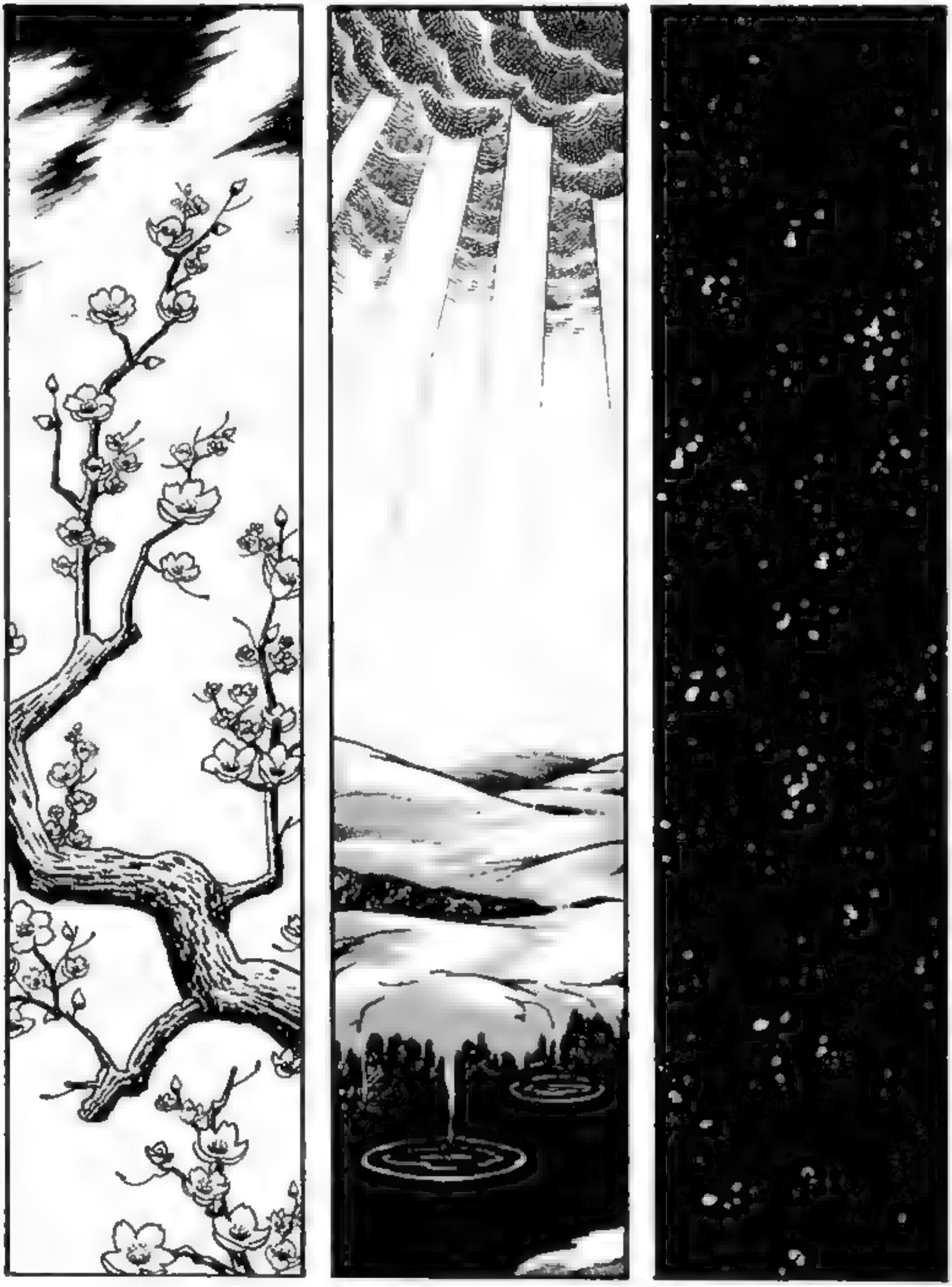

THE LANDS OF JINGZHOU WERE RICH AND FERTILE, AND ITS ARMY, LARGE AND POWERFUL

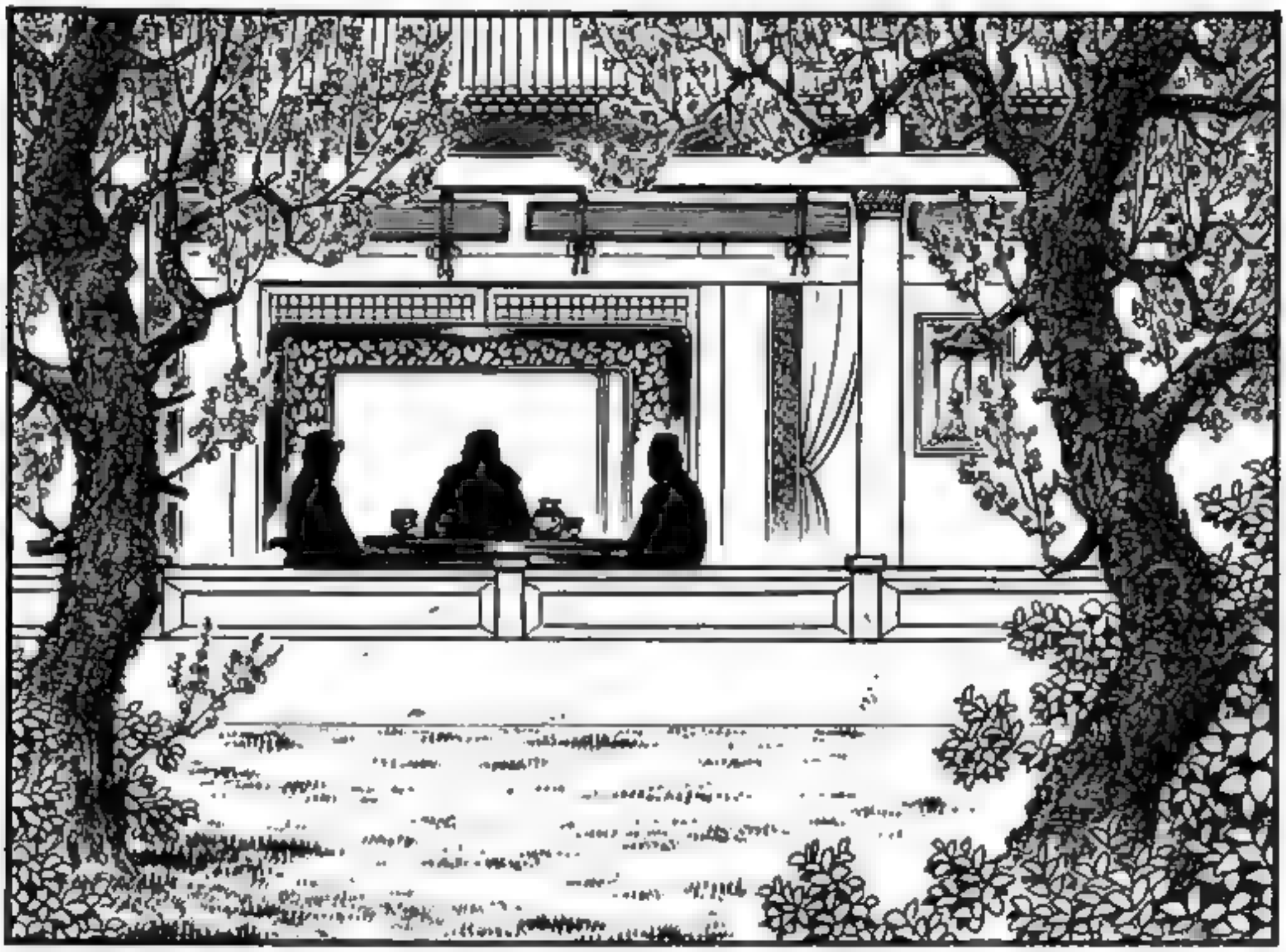
EVEN SUN CE'S FATHER, SUN JIAN PASSED AWAY IN BATTLE WHILE TRYING TO CONQUER JINGZHOU.


HAVING PLENTIFUL RESOURCES AND A POWERFUL ARMY, LIU BIAO REJECTED CAO CAO'S MESSENGER AND CHASED HIM AWAY


CAO CAO'S MESSENGERS QUICKLY RETURNED TO XUCHANG BEARING NO GOOD NEWS

THE PHYSICIAN, JI PING





YES, IF NOTHING IS DONE, THEN SOON NO ONE SHALL BE ABLE TO OPPOSE CAO CAO AT ALL.

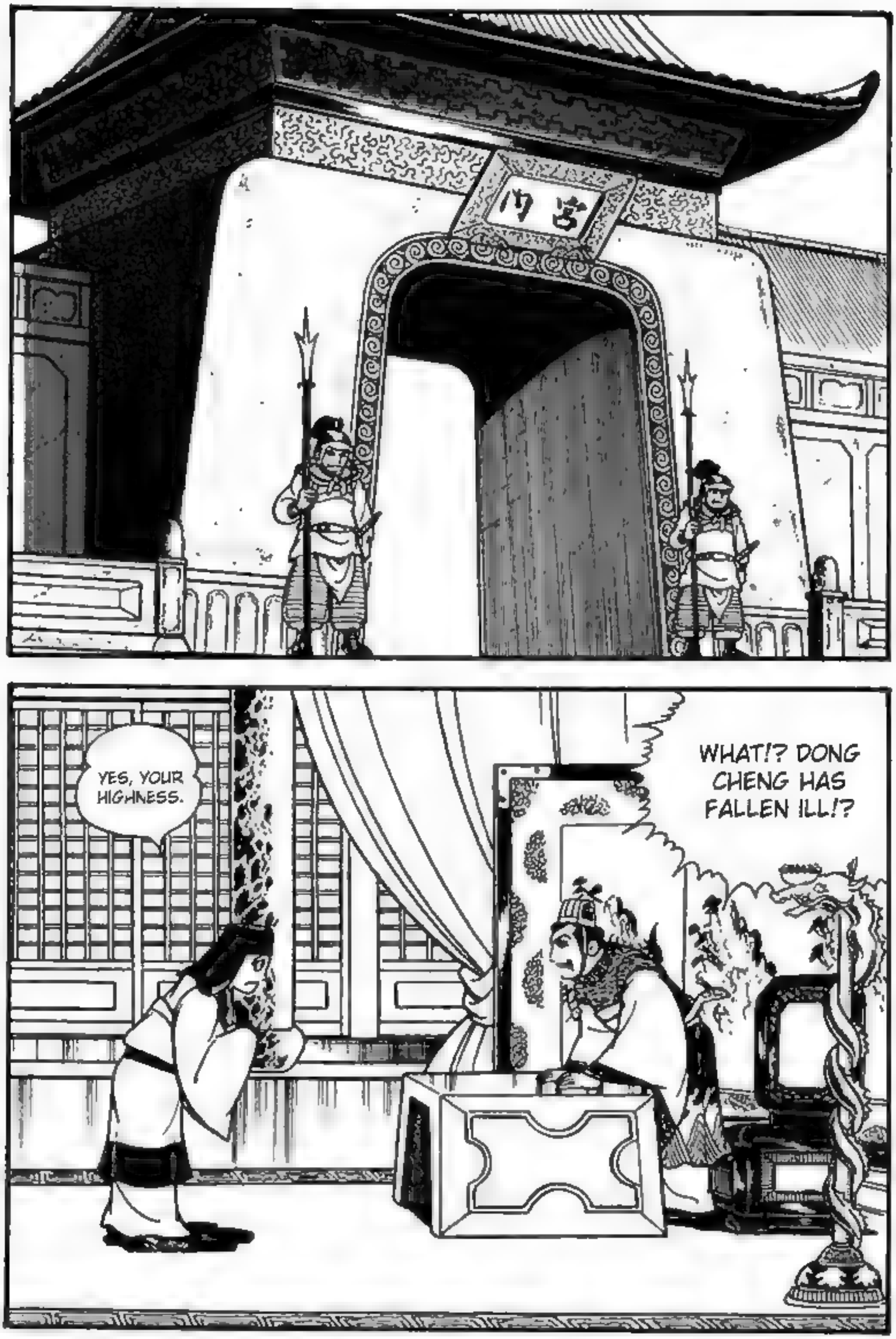
DONG CHENG, CAO CAO'S INFLUENCE BECOMES MORE POWERFUL WITH EACH DAY.

YES, AT THIS RATE, HE WILL DETHRONE THE EMPEROR AND PROCLAIM HIMSELF AS THE NEW RULER.

BUT JUST WHAT CAN WE DO? EVEN IF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO SIGNED THE BLOOD-SEAL PLEDGE COMBINED FORCES, WE ARE STILL INSIGNIFICANT TO CAO CAO'S MIGHT.

.....

I CANNOT EVEN SLEEP THESE NIGHTS FOR I'M WROUGHT WITH GRIEF AT HOW I CANNOT DO A THING FOR HIS HIGHNESS.

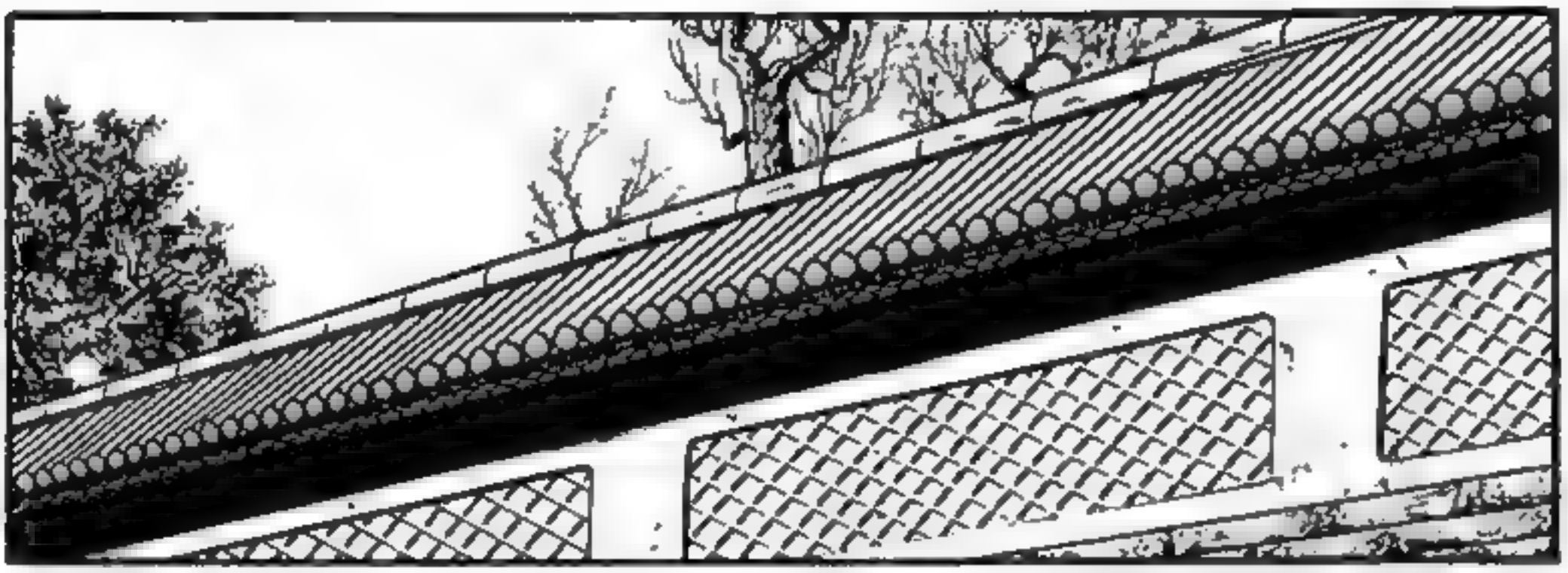

內宮
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.
WHAT!? DONG CHENG HAS FALLEN ILL!?

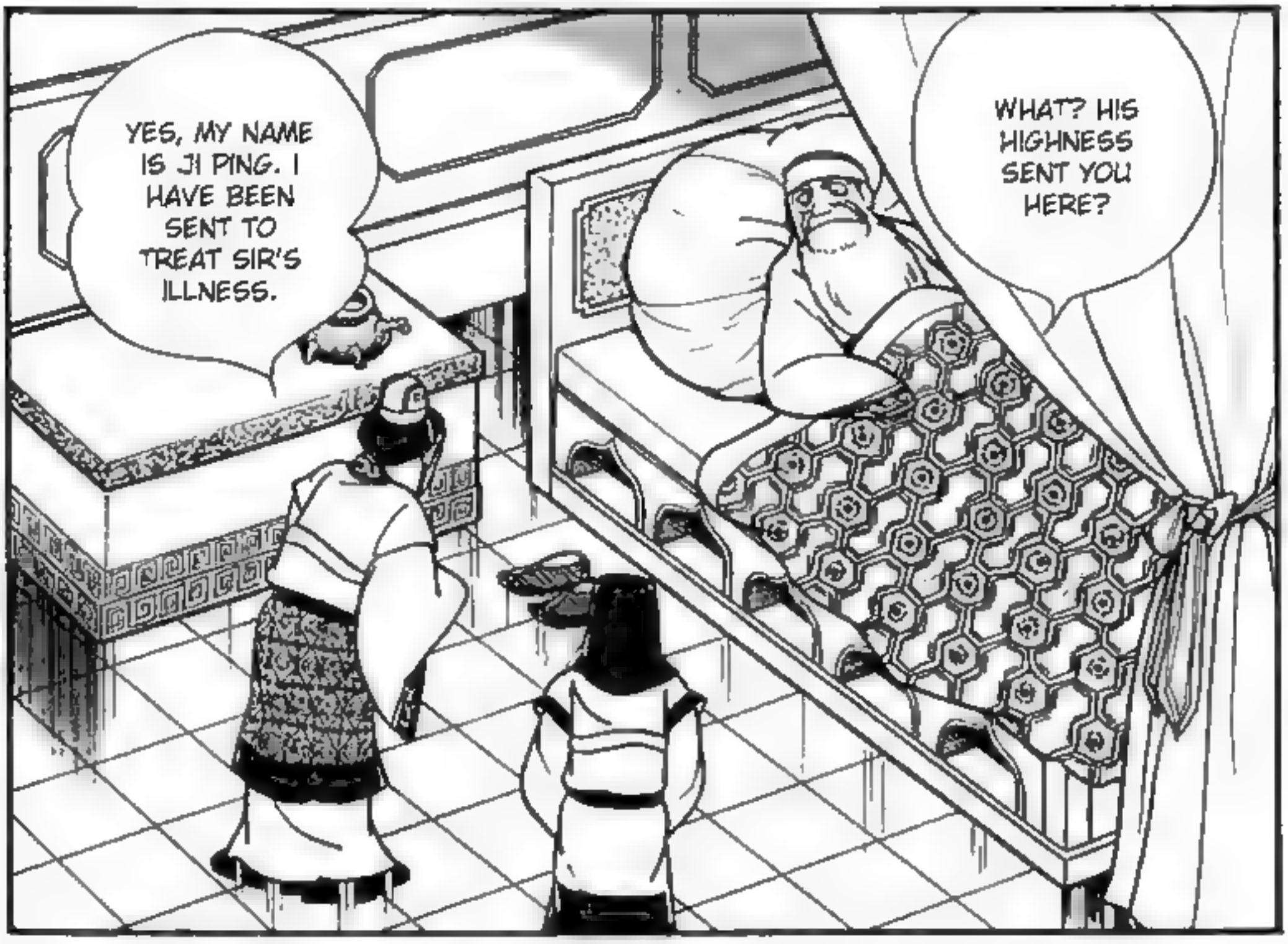
AH, OF COURSE. SEND THE COURT PHYSI-CIAN, JI PING!

DONG CHENG IS AN IMPORTANT ELDER STATESMAN OF HAN. A DOCTOR MUST BE SENT AT ONCE.

YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.

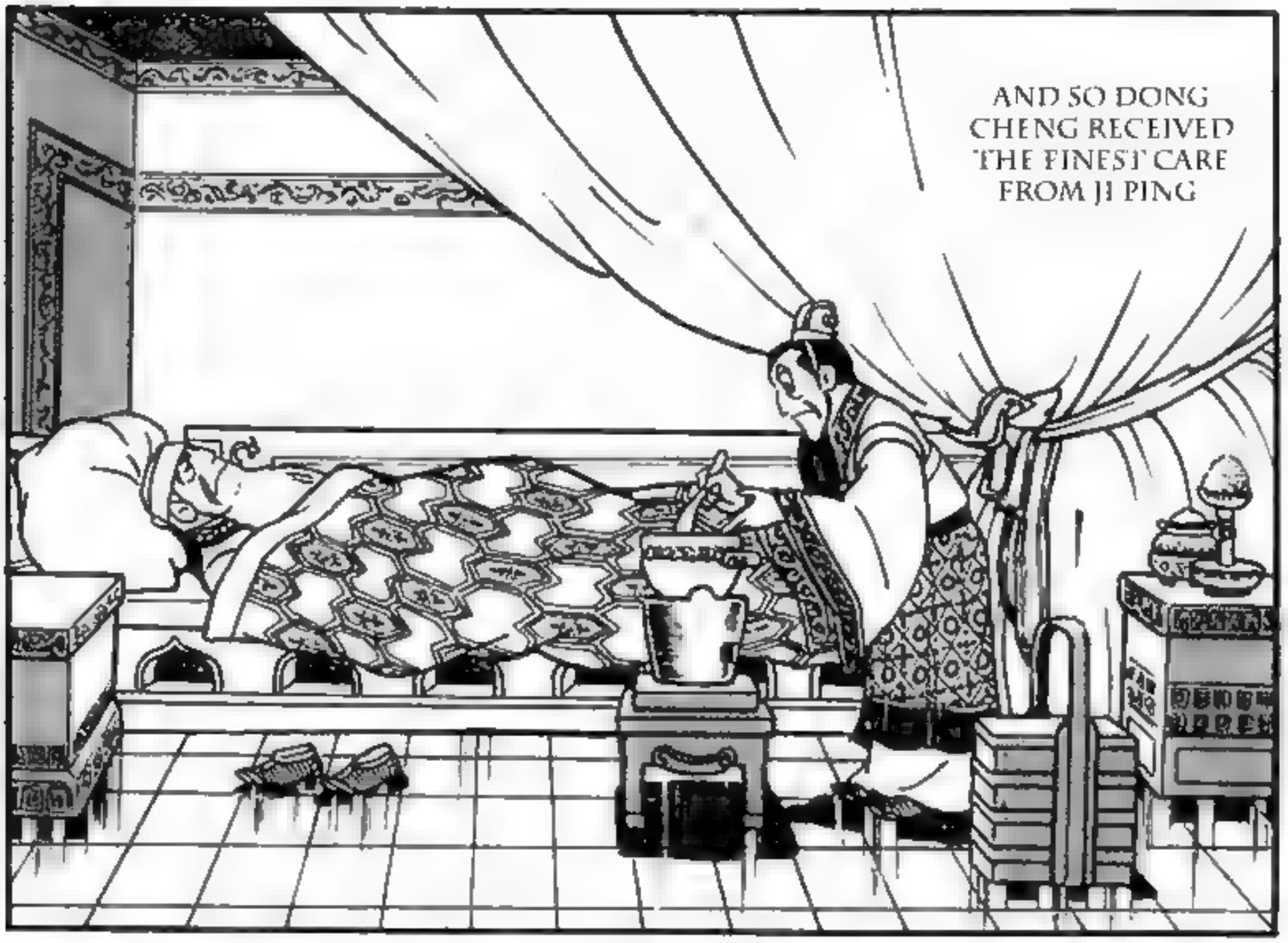
DONG CHENG, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THIS COUNTRY IF YOU WERE TO DIE NOW...?

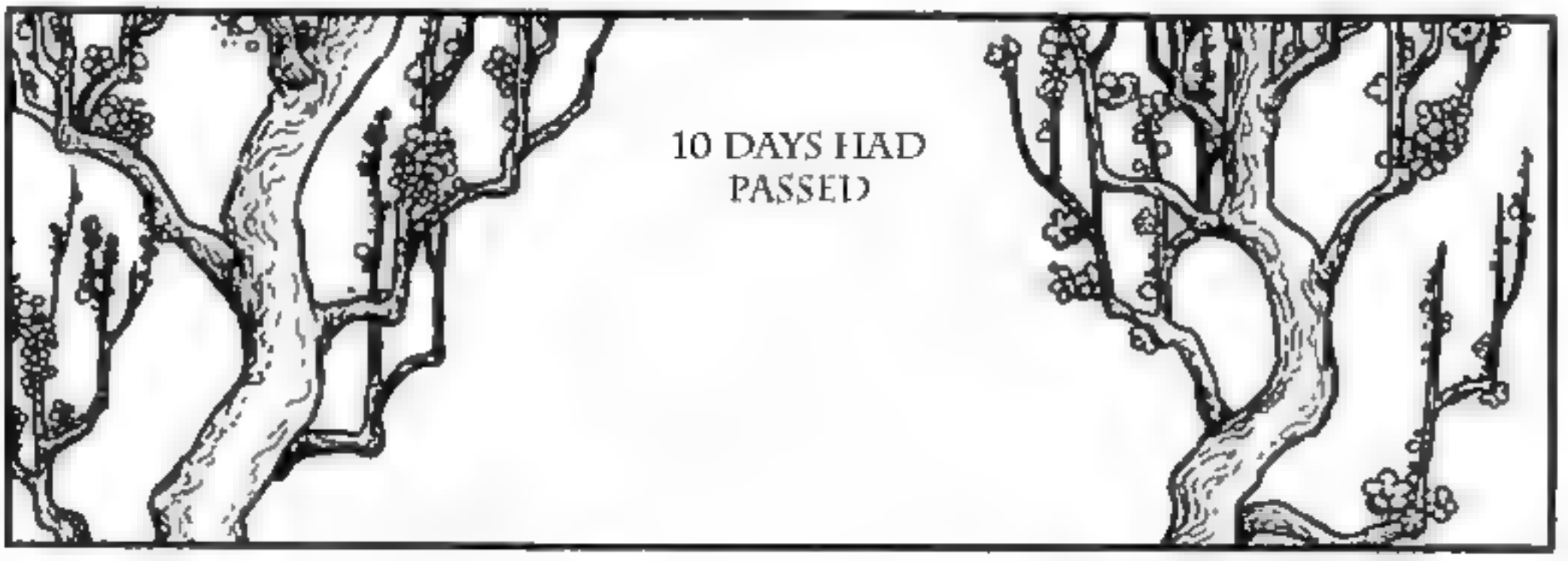



YES, MY NAME IS JI PING. I HAVE BEEN SENT TO TREAT SIR'S ILLNESS.
WHAT? HIS HIGHNESS SENT YOU HERE?

WITH THIS, I'M SURE SIR WILL RECOVER WITHIN 10 DAYS.
I SHALL PRESCRIBE THE FINEST MEDICINE TO SIR.

THANK YOU.


AND SO DONG CHENG RECEIVED 'THE FINEST' CARE FROM JI PING


10 DAYS HAD PASSED

HMM, THAT'S STRANGE. TO BE FRANK, I DO NOT SEE ANYTHING PHYSICALLY WRONG WITH SIR.

NOT TOO WELL...

HOW DO YOU FEEL, SIR?

IS THERE ANYTHING TROUBLING SIR THESE DAYS?

PERHAPS SIR'S ILLNESS IS PSYCHO-LOGICAL.

BUT MY CHEST FEELS PAINFUL WHEN I MOVE EVEN A LITTLE.

IT'S NOT AS IF SIR HAS ANY CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITION...

HMM, VERY STRANGE INDEED...

NO, I CAN'T SAY ANY-THING COMES TO MIND...

WHAT? HIS HIGHNESS HIMSELF ...!?

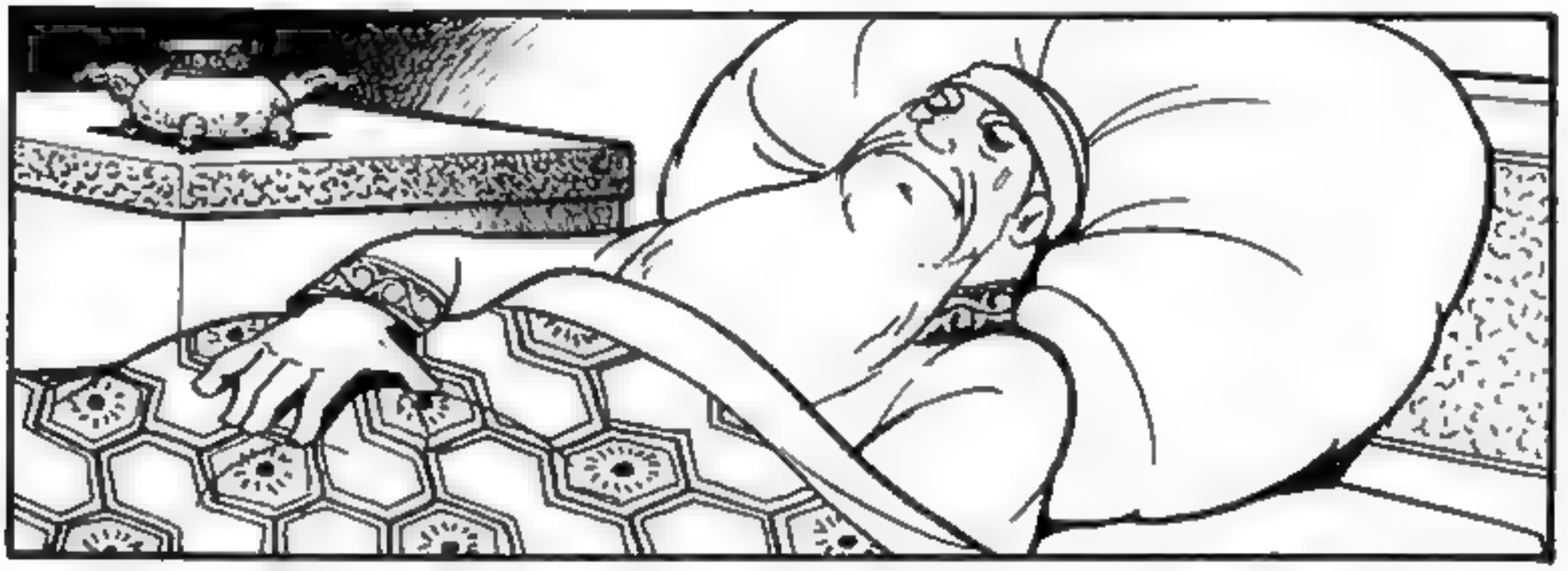
HIS HIGHNESS PERSONALLY ASKS ME OF SIR'S CONDITION EVERYDAY.

OH, HOW HELPLESS I AM...

YES...

IN ANY CASE, I HOPE SIR RECOVERS SOON AS TO NOT WORRY HIS HIGHNESS ANY LONGER.

I REALLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE'S ILL.



HE'S JUST MUCH TOO STRONG...
BUT JUST HOW CAN I GET RID OF CAO CAO?

I AM NOT AFRAID OF DYING,

I MUST COME UP WITH A WAY...

SIR!
SIR!
SIR!

AHH!

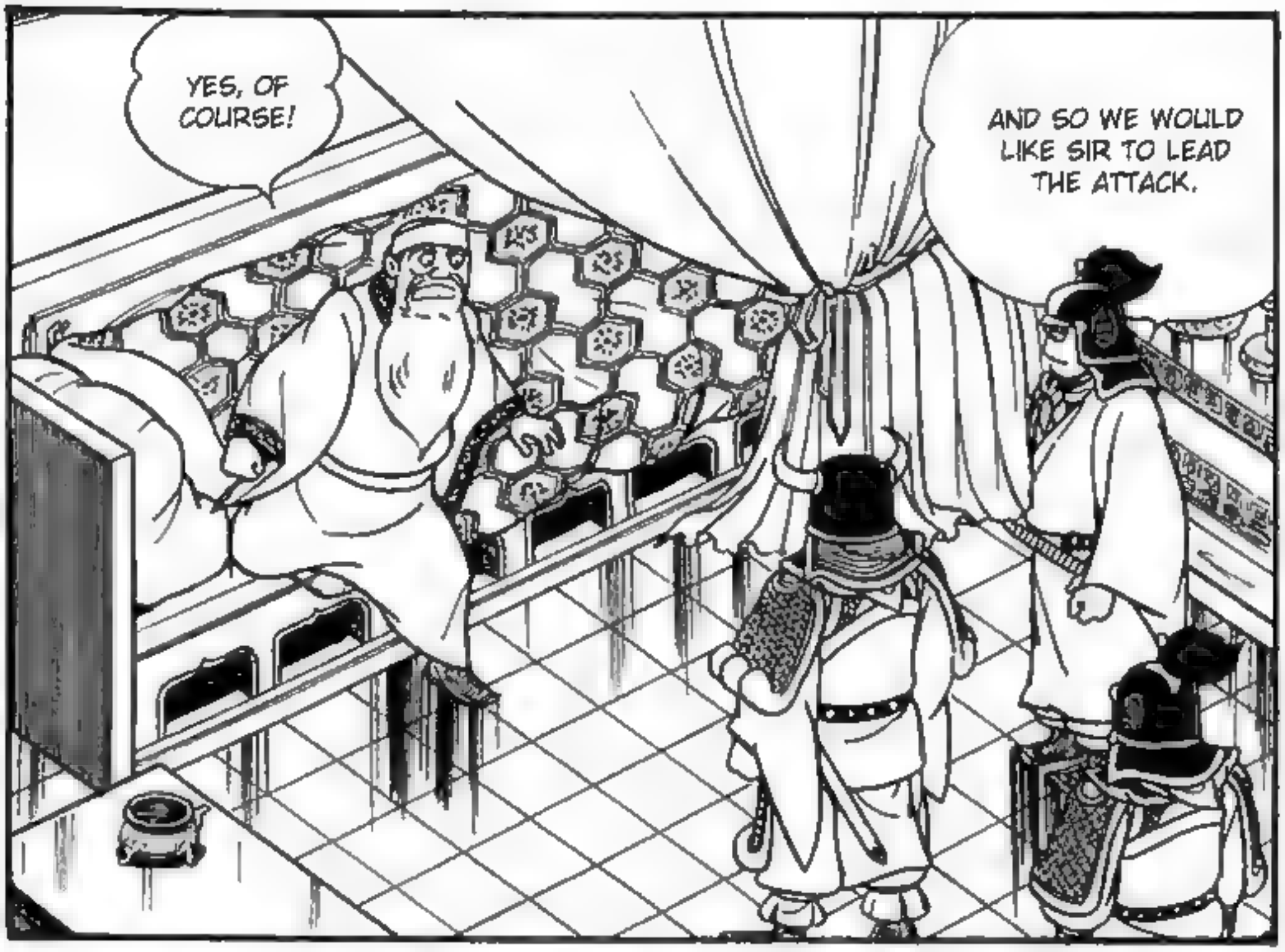
HMM?

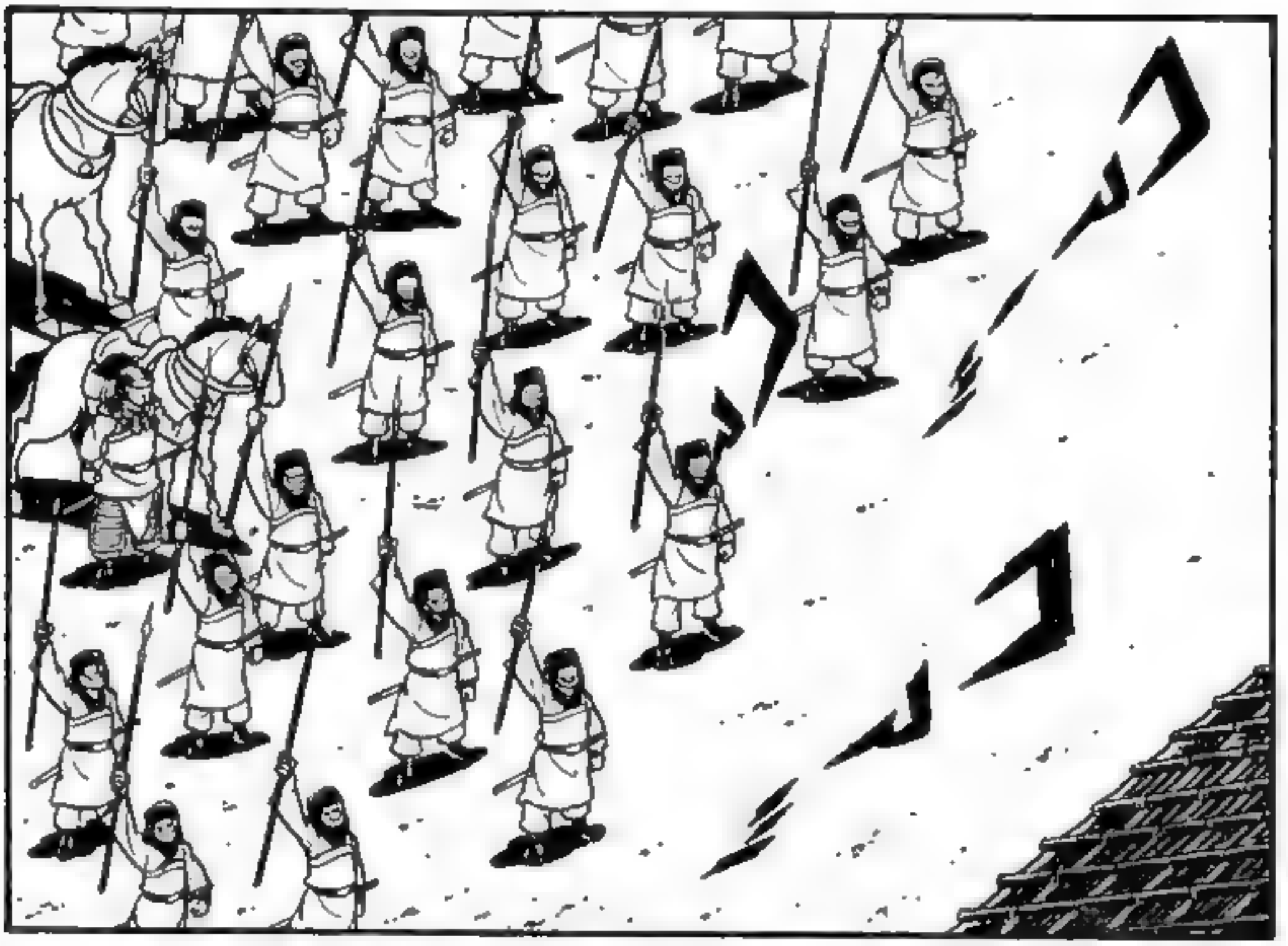
YUAN SHAO AND LIU BIAO HAVE JOINED FORCES TO MOBILIZE AN ARMY OF 500,000. NOT ONLY THAT, MA TENG, HAN SUI, AND LIU BEI HAVE ALSO JOINED FORCES AS WELL, MAKING THEM 700,000 STRONG.

SIR, THE TIME TO KILL CAO CAO HAS COME AT LAST!

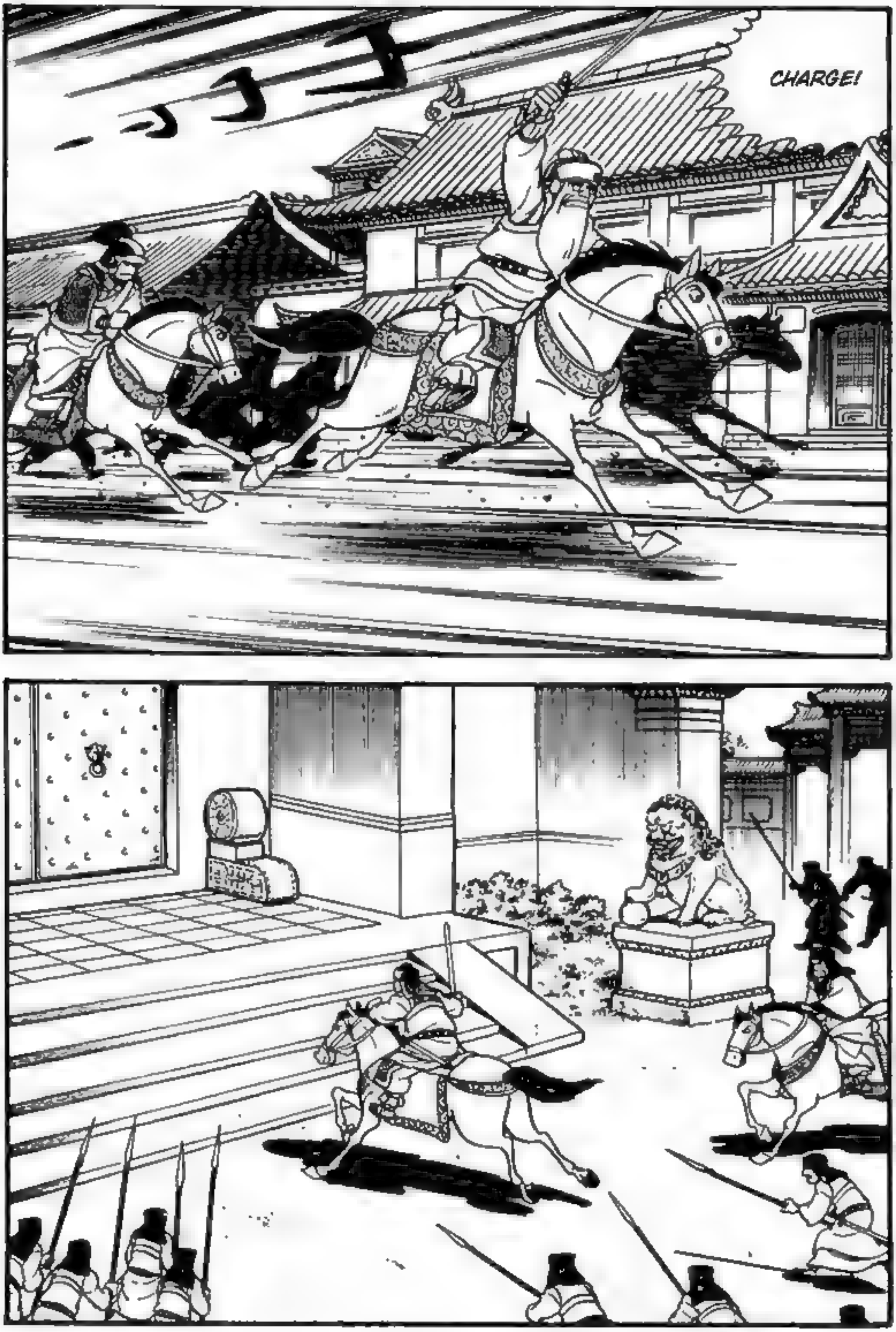
THERE COULD BE NO BETTER DAY TO TAKE CAO CAO'S HEAD THAN TODAY!

HEARING THIS, CAO CAO HAS SENT OUT HIS ENTIRE ARMY TO VARIOUS REGIONS OF THIS LAND, LEAVING THE CAPITAL COMPLETELY DEFENSELESS.


YES, OF COURSE!
AND SO WE WOULD LIKE SIR TO LEAD THE ATTACK.

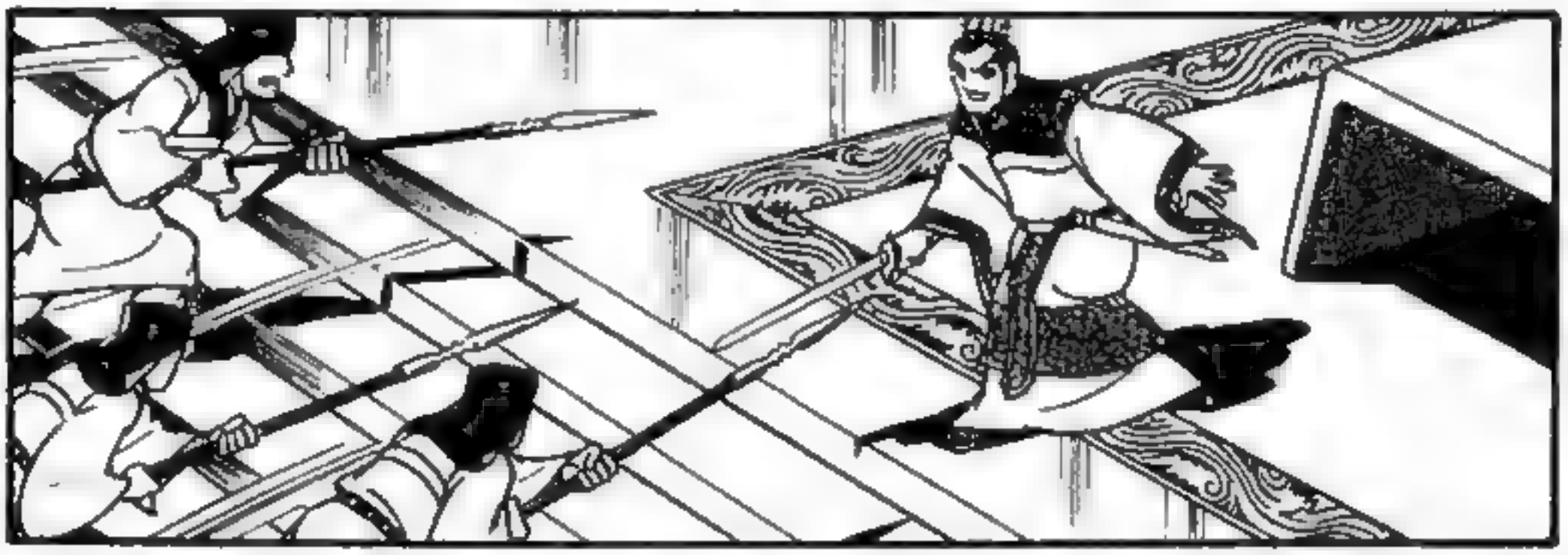


OUR TARGET IS CAO CAO AND ONLY HIM!


CHARGE!

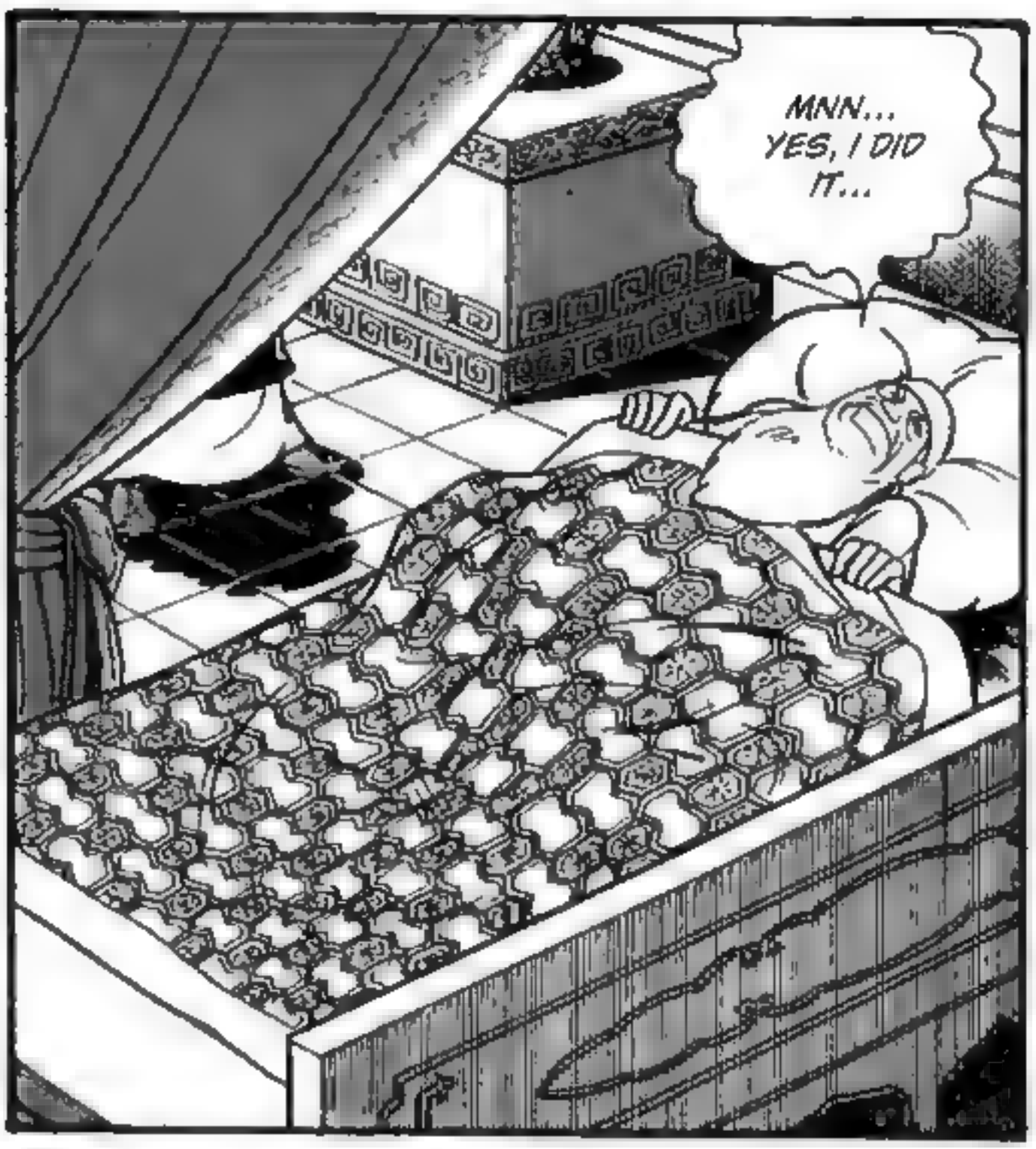
CAO CAO, YOU REBEL, SHOW YOURSELF!
THERE YOU ARE!

DONG CHENG...!

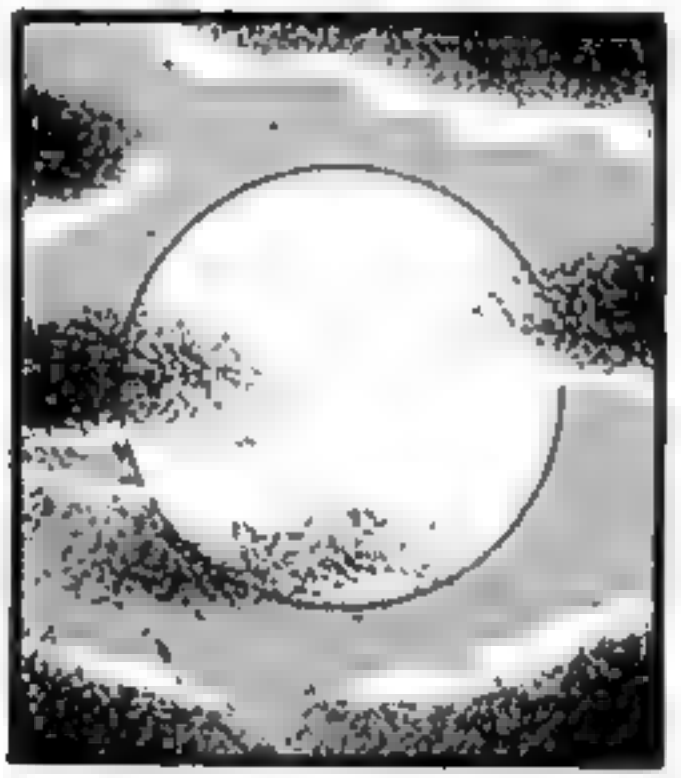


AGHHH!

LONG LIVE HAN AND HIS HIGH-NESS!


MNN... YES, I DID IT...

K.O



HUH?
WHA!?

SIR,
WAKE
UP!

AH, IT WAS
JUST A
DREAM...

W-WAS I
MUMBLING
SOMETHING
IN SLEEP!?

SO YOU DID
OVERHEAR
ME, DIDN'T
YOU!?

I BELIEVE I'VE
FINALLY DETER-
MINED THE
CAUSE BEHIND
SIR'S ILLNESS.

A TRUE DOCTOR MUST ALSO CURE THE COUNTRY AT TIMES.

PLEASE CALM DOWN SIR. AS A DOCTOR, MY DUTY ISN'T ONLY TO CURE THE PEOPLE.

SEEING HOW MUCH SIR HAS BEEN TROUBLED BY THE MATTER OF CAO CAO TO THE EXTENT OF BEING DRIVEN TO ILLNESS HAS MOVED ME. I ONLY WISH THAT I COULD BE OF HELP AS WELL.

SPIT!

DOES SIR STILL DOUBT ME?

LET THIS OATH WRITTEN IN MY BLOOD BE PROOF OF MY INTENTIONS. IF CAO CAO WERE TO FIND OUT ABOUT THIS, I, TOO, SHALL BE EXECUTED.
I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED SIR TO BE SUCH A LOYAL AND DEDICATED SERVANT OF HAN.
PLEASE, COME THIS WAY.

?

?

HERE, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS. IT IS A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO FEEL THE SAME WAY AS YOU AND I.

YES, THOSE PEOPLE ARE OUR COMRADES WHO HAVE SWORN TO RESTORE OUR HAN BY ELIMINATING CAO CAO ONE DAY.

T-THIS IS A BLOOD SEAL PLEDGE!

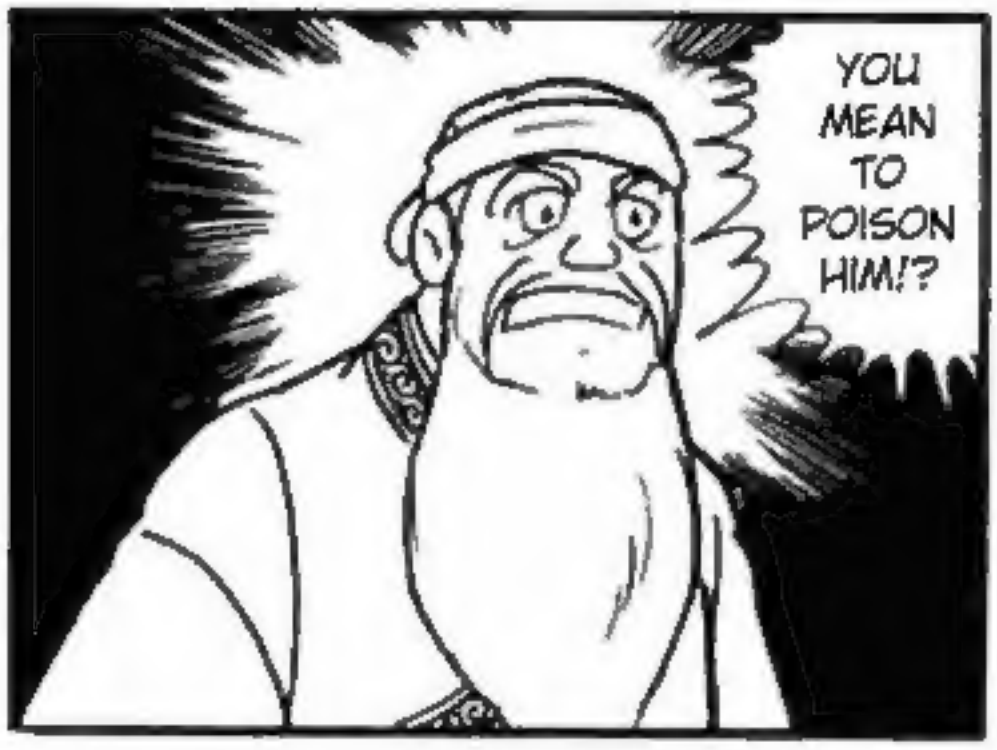
WHY, OF COURSE.

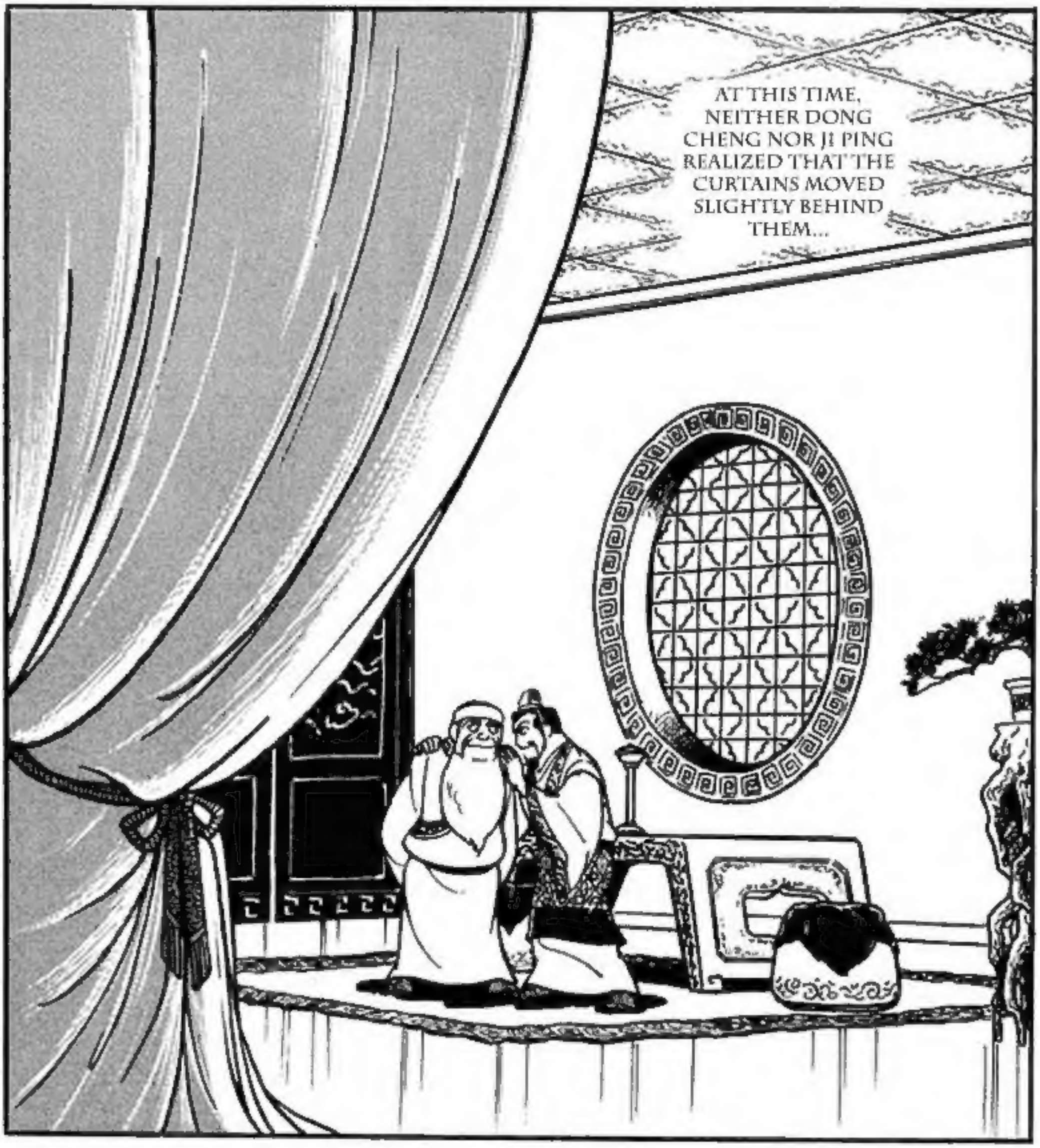
MAY I SIGN MY NAME ON THIS AS WELL?

I KNOW JUST THE CURE FOR SIR'S ILLNESS.

BUT EVEN WITH ALL OUR COMRADES, WE ARE STILL NO MATCH FOR CAO CAO. THAT IS WHY I HAVE BEEN SICK THESE DAYS.

CAO CAO HAS CHRONIC HEADACHES AND IT IS I WHO MAKES THE MEDICINE TO TREAT HIM.





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横山 光輝

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